

Boyd, Joe Interview pt 2 8-4-95

[Speaker 1]

By the time you came around, you would be maybe 50 yards apart. As you came in? You'd make a complete circle, go up and around and come down.

But you could get on the grass and you'd start with a short of gas. Sometimes you'd land with so little gas you couldn't catch up with the field.

[Speaker 2]

They had to tow you?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. Always sweaty gas.

[Speaker 2]

There are three main things that I've been wondering about. The first is, do you ever shoot down any German planes? I shot down two.

[Speaker 1]

This book will say one, but that's an error. There's a lot of errors in this thing. They're going back 50 years to put that together.

So I shot down two. But we weren't looking for them. I destroyed several on the ground.

But we weren't looking for them. Basically, our business was to take care of the bombers. Now, in England, they had a different theory.

When they went out there and the Germans came up, they immediately took off after them and they had dogfights. But that was very popular. And the Germans got very smart about that.

They'd get enough people up there to draw you away and then they'd have a free run at the bomb formation. We didn't shoot down many planes down where we were in comparison to what they did down there. So you'd just run away.

But we also didn't lose many bombers. We would have whole bombers on missions of 1,000, 1,300 planes on missions where we didn't lose a single bomber. The Germans had the advantage of being able to pick the time and place of whether or not they would fight.

They didn't have the advantage. They didn't come in. One of the missions I flew, in fact, I got a distinguished flying cross on it.

How did that come about? Well, I gave you information there. We had a bomber formation go up into Regensburg, Germany, where there was a basement factory.

The Germans got very upset when we started picking on their factory, their aircraft factory. And I took the crew buddies, and I was leading the wing that day. And there was 250 airplanes, and I took them about 100 miles further than we're supposed to.

See, what we had to do, we had to send the bombers out ahead of us because they carried more gasoline, and they'd be up for 12, 14 hours, and we'd be up for seven or eight. And we'd go catching. And sometimes it'd get kind of hairy trying to do that because you run into all kinds of weather conditions, and they'd be 200 miles ahead of you, maybe 150 miles ahead of you.

As a matter of fact, they had one case that you can read about if you have this book here, where he found the wrong bomber formation. He was the only fighter cover they had, wasn't he? But anyway, I went up on this thing and took the fighters up.

They were being attacked by maybe as many as 100 Germans. And we took our fighters in to about an extra 7,500 miles. And when we got there, they broke off.

We didn't make any contact with them. We didn't shoot down a single German plane, but they didn't lose a bomber after we got there. We escorted them out.

And on the way back, I stopped and picked up a couple of strike bombers, had the engines shot out, and escorted them out. And a little sidelight to that. Back about 10 years ago, I was attending a sales meeting in North Carolina, and there was a man sitting a mile left, big dog, who'd flown an airplane up in Florida.

He was a representative of the same company that I was representing. And we were sitting there, and we started talking airplanes. He said, V-38 saved my life.

It was on 25th of February, 1944. He said, we went to Regensburg, Germany. And he said, I had two engines shot out.

It was coming out, and I knew I wasn't going to get by those German planes up there. And he said, little V-38, turn back. And I said, and they picked you up and escorted you out?

And he said, yeah. And I said, I'm the guy that did it. Small world.

That's amazing.

[Speaker 3]

What did he say?

[Speaker 1]

I said, you owe me, boy.

[Speaker 2]

You owe me.

[Speaker 1]

So we had a big laugh about it.

[Speaker 2]

He bought you dinner or something, I hope.

[Speaker 1]

Anyway, that's a little interesting sidelight. There's been a lot of interesting things happening in my life. I've had a good life.

I started telling you a while ago, I got this job as a test pilot out in California. Now, I'm a guy that doesn't have to shave every day, even at age 75. Blog and so forth.

I just got married. My wife and I were going out to play tennis. I had on shorts.

A sweatshirt. Not a sweatshirt. A T-shirt.

And I got a ticket. I bought a car and got a ticket. And so this guy stopped me.

Who are you? He said, let's see your driver's license. I don't have a driver's license.

He wrote me up, I don't have a driver's license either. You'll be in court tomorrow morning. See y'all.

By the next morning, I'd cleaned up. I'd put on my uniform. Three rows of ribbons, wings, and bars.

And I go in this place. This judge looks me over. He said, they got you for running a traffic light.

Yes. Did you? Well, sort of.

I said, I slow change gears and roll through the side. Yes, I'm guilty. Got you for not having a driver's license.

Yes. Why not? I just got back from overseas.

How about the one you had before you went overseas? Before I went overseas, I was a baby. He said, are you sure you're a pilot out there?

I'm sure. He said, what's those ribbons stand for? He made me go through every ribbon I had.

I had the Distinguished Flying Cross. I had the Purple Heart. I had the Air Medals.

I had stars on some of them and all this stuff. He said, are you stupid? No.

He said, are you an instructor? I said, no. He said, what do you do?

I said, I'm a test pilot. That's what he lost at. That was the worst of it all, right?

Of course, I looked like I was probably 18 years old. I didn't look my age. I'm aware of that.

He wouldn't believe it. He called the base before he turned loose. Really?

Yeah. I'm the only man who was ever a test pilot before he had a driver's license.

[Speaker 2]

So he turned you loose and he let you go?

[Speaker 1]

Well, he had a lot of interesting things like that. But they don't come to me often. We're talking about 50 years from now.

[Speaker 2]

So you don't remember a lot about one of the dogfights you were in?

[Speaker 1]

Oh, you can remember them. But what's to remember? I mean, you're going around and around in circles.

I remember one time we were in southern France from where were we? We were in Italy at the time, I guess. And we had a fellow named Fillmore.

He was in California. He was leading the thing. And incidentally, I thumbed through the book trying to find his name and couldn't find it.

Somewhere he got left out of the thing. But anyway, we always had radio silence going into the target area. We had to break silence when we got to the target.

And it was bad weather. There were clouds, big clouds everywhere. And we used the term the Blue River Cove because you kind of pick it up on your radio.

So he said, follow me, man. That's when he broke radio silence. He said, follow me, man.

I'll take you to glory or I'll take you to hell. And about that time the Germans came out of the clouds, we went around and around. And we shot down four or five airplanes that day.

And as we were coming out of the area, we had everybody check in. And we were all there. It was glory.

But during that fight that day, I got separated. And I was chasing the German around trying to shoot him back. And every time I'd take a shot at him, he'd move just a little bit.

And I'd miss him. He'd touch it a little tighter and I'd shoot behind him. And we put big letters on the side of our airplane, numbers for identification purposes.

And also we'd color them. Sometimes it was red, sometimes yellow, whatever. And my letter that day was Q-2.

And I kept hearing somebody say, Q-2, keep turning, there's a man on your tail. Q-2, keep turning, there's a man on your tail. The actor's had it about three times.

And I looked back, there were three of us in that circle. This guy up front was leading me around while the other guy was shooting back. Now, you get caught in one of those circles, it's very difficult to get out because if you roll out of it, then he's got you lined up.

So I hollered for help. And this guy, big John Eastman guy, who told me about always in trouble, he says, I'm coming, JoJo. He came through and shot this guy down off my tail.

And then we both chased this other guy up there. He got away. That's the type of thing you see.

There was hundreds of them. While I was on the boat coming home, after I decided not to fly those extra seven missions, I was on the boat coming home, and they sent the guys out on the strafing mission across. They were going to escort other P-38s that were going to dive bomb those oil refineries over there.

It was a terrible, terrible event. Everything about it was wrong, and they lost us about the whole squadron. And I would have been leaving then, I'm sure, if I hadn't.

[Speaker 2]

Really? And plus, it was a nasty business.

[Speaker 1]

Germans didn't want you picking on the oil refineries either. And we could bomb that thing just about whatever week. And they had it back in operation in a short time.

They could do it all over again. And it was well fortified. Very well fortified.

It was hard. And the main thing was, the airplanes were not like they are today. I mean, the airplane was in its infancy.

We had little, nothing airplanes when the war broke out. I mean, P-40 was about the best we had. That was one that the Flying Tigers had.

It planted some sharks, some teeth on it and all that. Gradually, now, the P-51 came on later, and that was a fine airplane, and a whole lot like the Messerschmitt. You had a hard time identifying them.

[Speaker 2]

Really?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, they looked a little like a Messerschmitt. They had good range. Now, one time, I was up over your house, and I had an engine catch on fire.

And the first thing I knew, the first thing I did was put your bell out, and then I looked over, and a big big four hit the ground anyway, the bell out in there, so got your fire put out, and threw it home on one engine. But I got into bomber formation and all that. There was a fight going on.

I knew I wasn't going to fight anybody on a single engine, so I got into bomber formation, which is a tricky business, too. We had some cases where the Germans had captured some P-38s, some had been wrecked, and they'd bring them back together. And we'd go up and act like they were friendly, and then suddenly they'd turn on the bombers, and the Germans would shoot one of them down, and then they'd be gone.

So you had to be very careful going into that bomber formation. I called and told them I wanted to ride their wing a little bit, and he said, come in sideways. So I had to sneak in sideways.

He wouldn't dare point the thing at me. They must have been 150-caliber guns. They were big.

If I made a false move, they would cut that airplane to death, and you wouldn't blame them. But the main thing, you always had a problem with gas. You were running short of gas.

You had oxygen problems a lot of times. If you would read this book, you would find the man here named Paul Bensley. He was the other sergeant pilot who had it for the first time, I think.

He was a Confederate fighter. And he went up. He had an oxygen problem on his plane and went up to the test office and never came back.

We never knew what happened to him. He was just gone. We think that he had an oxygen problem, and he got bashed out and crashed in the ocean.

We were probably 30 miles off the coast at the time. There was an Arab that showed up about 10 days, 2 weeks later after he disappeared and told that he walked some 30 miles or something to tell us that he saw one of our planes go underwater. And it corresponded to about the time that Paul Bensley disappeared.

And they were willing to believe him, but he wouldn't be paid for what he did. And then the entire question of whether or not he was a fighter. Yeah.

[Speaker 2]

When you first came to the combat group, the fighter squadron, you weren't an officer at that point, and you were having trouble with the formations and learning how to do it all. Were there any problems getting to know the guys and having them accept you?

[Speaker 1]

No problem. Really? The only problem ever I had, and I didn't know who was doing it, was when somebody in the wing headquarters, which was above the group, there were five groups in the wing, and somebody in the wing headquarters kept killing off the battlefield commission for simple little reasons.

One time they took a picture of me, and I was in shirt sleeves and so forth. They didn't have a uniform. And the button on my shirt was undone, and the notation came back.

If I lost the material, I knew I had the buttons on my shirt. Another thing that irritates me some, while I was a flight officer and leading the group any number of times, probably the last 30 missions I flew, probably I was leading a squadron and sometimes a group and sometimes a wing. And Red 2 was the safest place that you could be, and I'd be flying Red 1.

And here would be some guy come out from wing, and they'd call me over to one side and say, Now, boy, this is Major So-and-so, and he's on a very important assignment today. He said, He's going to be flying your wing. You be sure nothing happens to him.

You look out for him. As if I didn't have enough things to look out for. Two weeks later, you'd see the decorations come through.

You'd hear the guy be getting a Distinguished Flying Cross for a systems analysis. The guy's wing. When I see a gentleman on television with an eight-throater rig, I know how he got them.

Every combat man knows the same thing. It's not just me that feels this way. Every combat man knows how he got those decorations.

There are exceptions. Some of them are actually in combat. Most of them are not.

When I was flying transport, we used to carry mail whenever a flight went out, had mail on it, plus other things. We'd stop in various places and deliver the mail. One day I had a colonel come out.

We had passengers all the time catching these planes, and they went up for one reason or another. This colonel came out, and he had a very unusual sigma, which I didn't recognize. Later I really didn't know what it was.

It was special services. When we got up to where we were going, he said, put my name on the form. I said, sir, we just normally fill out the pilot, and he said, put my name on the form.

The next day he wrote back with me. When we got started leaving, he went through the same thing again, put his name on the form. A little bit later we'd see where he'd get some distinguished service mail.

He was a postal officer. He was seeing that the boys at the front got their mail. We made that flight every day.

That's how a lot of those things go.

[Speaker 2]

What did you think of the Germans as flyers?

[Speaker 1]

Some of them were very, very good. They'd had a lot of experience. They'd shot the Poles over in Poland.

They had some of them that fought with the Russians. They'd gone down and fought in the desert, out in the Rommel. Some of them were very, very good.

Some of them had 300, 400 victors. They had a different way of counting them than what we did. They counted engines.

They shot out three of your planes. That was two. Oh, really?

[Speaker 3]

Yeah.

[Speaker 1]

Some of them had 400, but they shot out a lot of the guys that didn't do much in the war out in planes. But it gave them confidence. As the war went on, they got a lot of their good pilots that had been killed.

They got less aggressive. And as they started to realize the war was lost, they weren't quite as aggressive. And they never were anxious to come into the battle unless they had everybody in the world.

Most of them were war members. And you'd wind down. We had a...

If you run through this book in the appendix in the back, you would see that most of our guys that got killed had gotten involved in it, or most of all of them. They were mostly lieutenants, flight officers. As the war came closer to being an end, then we started getting guys overseas who had been instructors back in the States and building up an archive.

And believe me, a man who's got \$2,000 flying time, don't care where it is, he knows everything there is to know about it. You couldn't tell him anything. Some of these guys were majors.

All the lieutenants in them were 43. They got to be some captains, majors. Occasionally become colonels.

You couldn't tell them a thing. They had high losses. We had one guy come in and made very disparaging remarks to our squadron.

He was a veteran instructor, and he had almost 3,000 hours. They put him in my flight, and I said, Now, one thing you got to do is stay in formation. There's safety in numbers.

We can protect the squadron. We can't protect individuals all that easily. We were on a mission, and the Germans had a habit.

They'd set a decoy down. They'd get up in the sun and wait. They'd set a decoy down, kind of like a fluttering bird out in front of them.

You took off after them. Then they'd pounce on you. They set one down, and he got on the radio.

There's one. Let's go get him. I said, Stay in formation.

He said, I'm going after him. He took off after them. They'd kill him.

He didn't last a second. He took off formation. You couldn't tell him a thing.

Paid with his life, didn't he? Yeah. You just couldn't tell him.

But toward the back of this thing, you would see, I don't want to show it here, but if you was reading in this area here, you would find that there was a lot of guys who came over late, This is about the way you looked when you went out on a mission.

[Speaker 2]

And that's with the oxygen mask affixed, flight helmet on. Yeah.

[Speaker 1]

That's a main mask. The dinghy you sat between your parachute and your seat, between your parachute and where you were sitting down on. You actually sat on the dinghy instead of the parachute.

It fit inside of it. But that's about what one looked like. And there's a story I've told it many times to each one that's been talking.

hard part, those airplanes were very, very cold. Very cold. The guns were in the nose.

And you had to have a hole about ya big around that machine gun to cause the vibration to begin. So wind whisked right through there. We went across the Alps in the wintertime.

I don't know how cold it got, but we had the thermometer and everything and it went to 60 below. And you would hit that 60 below before you ever got across the Alps. Now, you'd get up about 4 o'clock in the morning and start your mission to get off the ground about daylight.

You'd go over and get you some breakfast. And most of the breakfast consisted of almost nothing but some good hot coffee. You'd drink about two mugs of that.

And you'd get up. Then you'd put on all these clothes. Long john underwear.

And wool pants. And fleece lined pants. You'd look like a mummy.

And you'd go. You'd fly about 3 hours. And that's when the coffee would hit you.

Now I'm here to tell you that a 60 below zero would make a good boy out of a full grown man. If you start digging through all those clothes and that you had a little tube down here. It would come out from under the sink.

If you could get it you had to get you here because that's all you could find. Right. There was barely anything here.

Then you'd try to throw it into that little funnel. And of course it would freeze. Throw it back at you.

[Speaker 2]

It would freeze on the spot?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. And then you'd those were sure smelly airplanes. We had another funny incident.

Well it happened on a mission. When we went down to Pole Valley I was speaking of. We hit those guys at daylight.

That's when they were getting out of bed. Plumbing conditions in the war zones were very primitive. What you would be able to do would be dig a trench.

That would be where you would do your business. And put a block or something over on one side and then bore across it. And then when they'd throw dirt back over to one side they'd take a shovel and then when you'd go out there to view this thing you'd take a shovel and cover up your mess.

We started down there at Pole Valley. We had four airplanes in my flight. We spread them out.

We spread out almost sixteen airplanes in the squadron. And the other squadron was doing the same thing. So we swept Pole Valley.

We popped a little hill. There was a guy out there sitting on one of these places. Four P-38s leveled out on him.

He saw us about the same time we saw him. He jumped up and started running. Shining in the breeze.

And every time somebody tried to shoot at him his pants would trip him. And he would fall and his head would run over his head. He never did kill that guy.

He got away. I think I told you about all I know to tell you. I don't know anything else.

If you had two or three guys around talking at the same time remember when, go for it. And that's one guy would bring up something and another guy would bring up something else. These things would all come back to you.

Alright. I don't know anything else. It comes to my mind right at the present time.