

Burns,PaulE-11-12-00

[Speaker 1]

My grandparents finished high school and worked around there until the war was declared on the 7th of December, 1941, and I was inducted to Twin Harbors. So I missed 22 days.

[Speaker 2]

Do you remember when you found out that Pearl Harbor had been bombed?

[Speaker 1]

I heard it on the radio on the 7th, and I was in Class A, in the draft. My brother was already in the service, in the Air Force, so he contacted me and said, if you're in 1A, you'd better try to enlist and get in the Air Force. Don't get me in.

He said to get in the Air Force if I can. So a friend of mine and I left home the 26th of December, 1941, and went to Louisville, and went to the recruiter's office. As soon as we left, after we signed up, he said, tonight.

[Speaker 2]

Reality is slowly hitting you.

[Speaker 1]

So we went there to Fort Thomas, Kentucky. We were down there three days, getting shots and vaccinations, and the 29th of December, I was inducted.

[Speaker 2]

What were your thoughts about the war at this point?

[Speaker 1]

Well, I really didn't know. I was young, and I guess it was challenging. A friend of mine and I went in, and we left the 1st of December.

Well, they gave us three picks of where we wanted to go. Biloxi, Mississippi, Garrison Barracks, Missouri, or Sheppard Field, Texas.

[Speaker 2]

It wasn't more than Indiana.

[Speaker 1]

No, so I talked it over with Bill, my friend, and I said, well, if we go to Garrison Barracks, Missouri, on a three-day pass, we'll have more time at home. So we thought, well, we'll go to Garrison Barracks, Missouri. They made our papers out in Biloxi, Mississippi, and we wound up at Sheppard Field, Texas, so we got all three picks.

[Speaker 2]

Why didn't you even ask?

[Speaker 1]

We got down there on the 3rd of January, 42nd, section below zero, and I weighed 128 pounds. So we got down there and started through the medical lines and everything just to

make it clear to the doctor. He said, son, you said you were going to spend twice more money to make a good shot.

And I said, well, sir, if you're not satisfied, I'll go back for you.

[Speaker 2]

You're just trying to get along, aren't you?

[Speaker 1]

But anyway, we went to a mechanic's school down there, an aircraft mechanic. It was partly through school, and they got our orders all mixed up, and they took us out of school and shipped us to Santa Monica, California, special school in B-25s. All we know is that was the front and back of the plane.

But anyway, we were there for 36 days in Santa Monica and shipped out to come across the United States to connect to a photomapping squadron. And they just had one plane when we got to Connecticut. But in three weeks, we had B-25s that they were supposed to get.

And we took some training up there and went to Bolingfield, Washington, D.C. And that's where we kept our B-25s. And so we stayed down there about four months. But we got our orders to go to La Crosse, Wisconsin.

And we flew from Bolingfield to La Crosse, Wisconsin. And from there, we were supposed to take a troop train to Churchill, Manitoba, Canada. Well, that's up on the north end of Hudson Bay.

And it was in February. And we got on the troop train there to La Crosse and had all of our art and gear, our parkas and snowshoes and skis and all that. So we went on the troop train and it took us two days to get up there on account of snow and everything.

And we got up there and started to get off the troop train. And we saw this fellow out on the bulldozer out there, which had snow, out on the bulldozer snow branch. He had a face mask on and it was all froze.

So we got out off the train and didn't even have our top coats on. And the lieutenant went over and asked this fellow, he said, how cold is it up here? And he said, well, I just came from Nassau about 10 minutes ago and it's 32 below zero.

[Speaker 2]

I don't think they're training for the Pacific Theater.

[Speaker 1]

So anyway, the planes flew up there and the crews came up. And I was the assistant engineer on them. And all I flew was, well, I flew quite a bit whenever they wanted somebody to fly with them, I'd go with them.

[Speaker 2]

What was your job at the time?

[Speaker 1]

I was assistant engineer, I mean mechanic, in case something went wrong.

[Speaker 2]

And keep the plane running?

[Speaker 1]

No, we had covers that we put on the engines every night, but we had to get up four hours before takeoff. And put gears on to get the haul. But the trucks and the jeeps and everything, they had to keep running continuously.

Because if they shut them off, well, the motors would crystallize. And then we started flying to Churchill, doing some mapping up there. Because they figured if Russia wanted to come in and take over the United States, that they wouldn't come over.

So we photographed that and then we moved up above the Arctic Circle to South Hampton Island and flew out of there. And on some missions, the magnetic compass was close to the North Pole, but it would oscillate.

[Speaker 2]

Were you ever worried about crashing? Well, yeah. Even if you jumped out, you're not, no.

[Speaker 1]

But anyway, we flew in weather safety boats. Pilot, co-pilot, and that was the only one that had to be in suits.

[Speaker 2]

How'd you keep warm?

[Speaker 1]

Well, we put on everything we had. Everything but snowshoes.

[Speaker 2]

Your feet and your hands.

[Speaker 1]

Well, we had our winter clothing and had our winter flying towels, I mean, suits. And they was sheet lined inside. The middle part in the navigator's compartment, if you wanted to pour coffee, if you'd spill any hot coffee, by the time it hit the floor, it was ice.

It just turned into ice and quit.

[Speaker 2]

I don't know how you could use your hands or even work in that kind of cold.

[Speaker 1]

Well, we didn't have to work, you know, while we was in flight.

[Speaker 2]

Your work was to stay warm.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, mostly. But now we went from South Hampton Island to Procter Bay. It's on the eastern side of town, above the Orange Circle.

[Speaker 2]

So you're still a little coastal?

[Speaker 1]

Well, we photographed and mapped everything from Alaska to Greenland, all the territory. And then we came back to the States in June. It's February.

We came back in June to our base at Bradfield, Connecticut. And there we got B-17s and took our training there, transitioned from flying and training. And we got our orders to go to Africa.

[Speaker 2]

What year was this?

[Speaker 1]

In 1943. And we went to Africa.

[Speaker 2]

Did you go home? Did you leave home or anything like that?

[Speaker 1]

No, we didn't get no furlough payment. So we went to Puerto Rico and South America, and took over South America. And then we got to Ascension Island.

And then from there, we went to the Gold Coast, all of Africa. And then we started photographing all up the coast. Nigeria, French Camarero, all the way up to the Mediterranean Sea.

And then we went to Tunisia and the Alps here, India. And then we did some filming in China, the Fighting Tigers. We needed some aerial film, so I was on a mission to film in China.

The States, there were four planes in our outfit. It was due for a 1,000-hour inspection. And all the depots in northern Africa were full.

So we had an officer that was in with the Pentagon. So he was forming a deal for four planes to come back to the States.

[Speaker 2]

That's what it's all about.

[Speaker 1]

And we came back, and they gave us a seven-day furlough. And then we were supposed to report back to Miami to go back over to North Africa. And all of our gear, flying gear and everything, was over there.

We just brought enough home because they were just going to give us seven days to get home. And most of it was our uniform. But, anyway, on the seventh day, I furloughed in Cincinnati.

And a fellow that was in school that played basketball with the kids was over at the ATC, right past the field. And I contacted him. And he said, come up when you get ready to go to Miami, so I'll get you a flight, a free flight.

So on the seventh day, I reported in right past the field up there with the devil in the morning. So then I was in the hostel for close to five weeks up there. And in the meantime, they recut my order and transferred me to the B-29 outfit in Salami, Kansas, Smoky Hill.

And I thought that the rest of the fellows and the crew and everything went to back over to North Africa. Instead of that, they all went to Smoky Hill.

[Speaker 2]

Oh, you were lucky.

[Speaker 1]

I know.

[Speaker 2]

With your old crew.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, so we got out there. And they didn't have any 29s for them to, but they did fly 17s to pilots. And they had their four-engine time, but they had to get more four-engine time to qualify to fly the 29, which was a lot better plane.

So we've done a lot of transition flying and hydrogerology. And then they started getting B-29s assigned to us. And the ground echelon crew, they took off from South Pacific.

And a lot of the crew didn't go over the 29s because they only had so few 29s. And we went by a C-54 and went to Hawaii again and Johnson Island and on down until we got to the Marianas, Saipan. And that was on the 7th or 8th of November in 1944.

And we got off the C-54 and we did our monsoon season over there. And a fellow was there in a weapons carrier and he takes us down to the part of the cannery. And I said, well, where is it?

He said, well, I'll show you somewhere. So we stopped down at Mud Road and we got down there and the mud was almost hugged deep on the weapons carrier. And there we was, had our shoes big shine.

So we got out and he said, this is it. And I said, oh, boy. So then we had to go to the Air Force and get our sheets and blankets and everything.

And he was going to take us down to the cannery. We got down there and he said, well, let's take a tour. He said, well, let's sign it, you fellas.

We got out, waved the mud in. I got in and looked up. And you could count the stars through the cliffs.

And I asked him if there was any towels, went to the shower. But anyway, we were on the side of the cannery. And they flew very few missions from the side of the cannery to start with.

And then they transferred our whole outfit to Guam on the LSD. We only had two LSDs, the trucks and the jeeps and everything. And personally, we all went to Guam and set up down there.

[Speaker 2]

Are they debriefing you or telling you anything about the war while you're in Saipan or Guam?

[Speaker 1]

The only news that we had was on the radio. Tokyo Road broadcasted from Japan every day.

[Speaker 2]

Really? What did she say to you guys?

[Speaker 1]

Oh, she'd say, well, sorry to say, today there was a bombing raid with a B-29 from the Marianas. And they lost 75 or 100 B-29s, you know, and I thought, oh, gosh. But anyway, it's all propaganda, you know, because they didn't lose anything.

[Speaker 2]

Did it work on you at all? Oh, no. It still works on you?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. But anyway, then we started flying to Guam. And I don't know which mission it was, but we ran out of gas coming back in the B-29.

And I heard a pop. Well, it was close to Kenyon, and Kenyon's just across the bay from Saipan. And I heard a pop say, Joe, how's our gas?

And he said, we'd better stop at Saipan and gas up before we go on. So we called in operations and got permission to land. And by noon, stationed at Saipan.

We're good.

[Speaker 2]

Want to take a minute?

[Speaker 1]

Yes. We got to this cliff, 90-foot cliff. It was there.

And it threw us, and we started right on top of the cliff. And we started in on the final line. You were down below the cliff?

The motor started backfiring and black smoke going past the booster. I thought it was all over. But we did manage to hit the top of the cliff.

But we didn't hit it either runway. We had a crash landing there. And in the B-29, with the booster gutters, we had to ride backwards.

So the planes would be up here. And the backs of our seats hit us right here, the center of our back. And I wasn't Japan up there.

We had to wear flight suits. And usually, well, on the way back, Tom told us to disregard our flight suits anymore. So we started taking them off and putting them near our seats.

But I never did tighten my safety belt because I always done that just to come in for a landing. But I got disorientated by running out of fuel and everything. We knew that the cliff was there.

And I thought maybe this was going to be it. But the first time we hit the ground, it took out the nose wheel on the plane. And I latched on to the gun side, but it tore me loose from the gun side.

And then the second time we hit, it started down in between the tubes, and that's when the coral rock stuck down through there. And I went backwards over the seat. And then that belt caught me, that loose belt caught me.

And just, it whipped me. And when we stopped, somebody hollered and said, oh, let's get out of this damn thing. Well, guess it's on fire.

And I couldn't move. My legs just cracked. And it turned the right way off of it, see that?

No, it didn't. It broke loose. But anyway, two of the fellas, two of my buddies, got me up out of the seat and took me back to the camera room.

And they got me up to an auxiliary engine generator and picked me up to here and dragged me down to the fuselage. The plane was sitting at an angle down in the fuselage and down to the nose part. And then the ambulance and fire engines and everything was there already.

And the medic said, took me and laid me on the ground. On the ground, Mr. Painter come up and said, what's wrong? And I said, that's my back.

I said, I can't move my legs. So he said, well, I'm going to pick up your legs. And he let me know what hurts.

And he lifted me up and just barely lifted me up and just threw a knife in my back. And I let him know. And he said that.

And he said, he cut my coveralls up to sleep there and popped me with a morphine shot. And I laid there and they put me on a stretcher and they put me in an ambulance. But I was in the hospital about four weeks with my back.

And I've been suffering with it ever since. You can walk. I've been.

I'm an arthritis specialist. Since I've had my bypass surgery two years ago in July, I've had trouble with my legs. I can't walk more than about 50 yards.

And I never quit because it carries my legs just beyond the number. And my back hurts every morning I get up.

[Speaker 2]

It all comes back, doesn't it?

[Speaker 1]

So, yeah, it's bothering me. But anyway.

[Speaker 2]

The whole crew made it out of that plane, though?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. That crashed plane? Yeah, the whole crew made it in there.

And there's six of us left. There's still a lot of us.

[Speaker 2]

Out of ten or ten.

[Speaker 1]

You had pictures of the plane, too, don't you? Yeah, I had pictures of the plane. After it crashed.

After it crashed. I mean, parts of it. I mean, I didn't see any of it.

No. But my buddy, flying the other bus we got, he's at Stockbridge, Georgia. And I'm here about three weeks or so.

He sent me three pictures of that plane. The navigator, our navigator had taken pictures, but he didn't send me any. But he sent us some.

[Speaker 2]

Is that the first time he's seen pictures of your plane?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah.

[Speaker 2]

It's now sunset.

[Speaker 1]

So, anyway, I've had doctor examinations and EMGs on my legs and arteries and this and that. And they can't come up with any extra.

[Speaker 2]

Have you got a medical discharge now?

[Speaker 1]

No.

[Speaker 2]

For the service? No? They still kept you?

[Speaker 1]

Oh, yeah. I went back and flew after I got over the crash landing. I went back and flew.

He's only getting 10% disability now. I went back to read over my plane to try to get more of his stuff. But I was injured and everybody was wondering.

Said, did you get a purple heart? No, I just got a bad one. They had to put a patch on me.

One mission, one mission we flew, the tail gunner went back to pick it in. It's what we call the cubby hole back there where it flew. And he didn't like the bulkhead out of the camera room.

So, about an hour, hour and a half off the coast of Japan, we'd start to make our climb to altitude. And they started pressurizing. And when they started pressurizing, they just pulled that bulkhead door right on through.

And it's just like somebody picked a goose in there. All that quilling inside the foot fuselage, it tore it all loose. So, the pilot said, well, there's nothing we can do about it.

We have to use oxygen. So, we got up over to Japan and used oxygen all the way on the rest of the mission. And at one time, I took my goggles and put them up on my helmet to rest my eyes.

And I looked down on the floor of the camera room. And there they did. Meetin' a cameraman.

And his face was blue-black. So, I took my mask off and turned my regulator on to emergency. And I put it on him.

And then I started gettin' high-headed. And I'd get myself stabilized. And I'd put it back on him.

And I went for 10 or 15 minutes. And finally, I seen his eyes was clear. And I brought him through.

And I never did get any recognition for that. Saved his life. The only thing is, he called me Mother Burns.

From then on, for bringing me back into this world. That was what the NCO club was trying to do. It said, well, we're from Mother Burns.

What was his name? Bruce. Geneal Bruce.

Geneal Bruce. And he died of cancer.

[Speaker 2]

What kind of missions were you flying?

[Speaker 1]

Reconnaissance. I was with the photo reconnaissance out there. We'd go up and pick up targets for the 21st Bomber Command, the 20th Air Force.

And pick up targets. And then they'd come back and run us through the lab and everything. And then they'd turn them over to the Bomber Command.

And then the bombers would go up and figure out the targets and this and that.

[Speaker 2]

Did you have any fighter escort to protect you?

[Speaker 1]

No, we were up there alone. Sometimes we'd have to go in with the bombers. Well, there'd be anywhere from 200 to 400 B-29s going in for a raid.

And like 400 bombers would go in. But it's in four planes out of our aircraft with them. It'd go right in with the first SRI.

And then it'd send one back. So many flights. And then on back.

And then the last one would take up bombs. That's what damage you take up. But most generally, we were up there alone.

[Speaker 2]

Did you ever encounter any combatants of any type?

[Speaker 1]

Well, the last reunion we went to was at Omaha, Nebraska. And I talked to our navigator that was on our plane. And he said, Paul, he said, did I ever tell you about the Japanese plane that was coming at us at 12 o'clock?

And I said, well, it seemed to me like I heard something on the intercom about a plane. And I said, I never did see it. And he said, I did.

And it was hitting right to him just as they got almost together. But the fighter was thunderous. But surely it was a topicality.

I would say. Because we could look down and see the fighters trying to get up to us. And there was always a smoke stream go out.

Japanese Zeros, I guess, or whatever it was. Trying to get up to you, and they couldn't get to you.

[Speaker 2]

They couldn't fly that high.

[Speaker 1]

A lot of flak, though.

[Speaker 2]

Oh, yeah.

[Speaker 1]

A lot of flak. Because the bombers would go in and the aircraft guns would have the guns set up. Their flak and everything to the height that the bombers was coming in.

And then we had to go up north, somewhere up north in Honshu. One mission we made to Hokkaido, which is an island above Honshu. And that was 16 hours, in fact, 16 hours and 35 minutes.

But I was telling Greg, he said, well, how come they didn't use as much gas? And I said, well, when we got up to Japan, the jet stream was right over Japan. And we'd see the coastline down there, and it seemed like half an hour, 45 minutes.

You'd look back down, and it was the same. You wasn't going anywhere. Then you'd burn about 400 gallons of gas an hour.

But when you went up and made your run, magic run, you'd come out of there, you'd be doing over 500 miles an hour. I mean, we didn't come out of there.

[Speaker 2]

How do you deal with the stress? I mean, you've got to be kind of stressed and maybe a little bit of fear. How do you deal with the stress and fear when you're on a mission?

[Speaker 1]

You don't think, you don't, I don't know. It never did bother me. That part didn't.

The only part that bothered me was when they put me on an airplane. But other than that, probably, yeah. Well, one mission, we couldn't pressurize.

We burned out two gunning burgers in the CFC room. Well, that knocked out the top turret and the bottom turret, and we couldn't use it. And we had a CFC gunner that sat on a pedestal in between the two of us, a buster gunner.

And he was a, I said, punch drunk. He was a boxer, ex-boxer. And he'd spin around on that thing.

He'd kick you side of the head, you know, and say, well, keep your eyes open now, keep your eyes open. But it did get to the turret. It knocked in the head and everything, but we couldn't pressure.

I mean, couldn't use nothing but oxygen on that. Burned out the thing. And I thought, boy, what the hell, if this is a war, I want to get back home.

But we made it. Thankful.

[Speaker 2]

Yeah. Where were you then when you heard the, or how did you hear that the war with Japan was over, yeah?

[Speaker 1]

Over the radio.

[Speaker 2]

You weren't flying?

[Speaker 1]

No. We didn't fly that day, but there's a fellow, George Young, that was in my team, and they got his orders to go to Tinian. And he was a radio man.

And we had two planes that went for the atomic bunch from Tinian, and Tippet's, and the plane flew up there to photograph the destruction and everything from the top of the mountain. And George was stuck in my tent. And I had another celebrity stuck in his tent.

[Speaker 2]

Your plane to fame, huh?

[Speaker 1]

Isn't that interesting? It was Stockdale.

[Speaker 2]

Stockdale, huh?

[Speaker 1]

He was a, what was he? Oh, no room for sergeants. The fellow that wrote the book, no room for sergeants.

No time.

[Speaker 2]

No time for sergeants. No time for sergeants.

[Speaker 1]

He used Wilbur Stockdale. Andy Griffith played his role. But they used Wilbur Stockdale's name.

And he stayed in the same tent with Dad and Juan. Oh, my goodness.

[Speaker 2]

Yeah. Aren't you glad they didn't use you for the movie?

[Speaker 1]

We go down to Belgium. There was a place in Belgium, Illinois, and we've been down there three or four times to see Henry Flynn. Tell her about Stakely being the first over in, you know.

Stakely was a captain. He came out of Brigadier General. But he and his crew flew, I forget how many hours, from Kansas on to Guam and north to Saipan.

And he and his crew was the first B-29 to fly over, over Tokyo since General Doolittle. B-25s rigged up there. And he was in our outfit.

Stakely wasn't. They had the World War II. He and his, and Stakely came to all of them.

Yeah.

[Speaker 2]

Oh, wow.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, I was talking to him. I was in Canada. I flew in 25s.

And he had a habit of getting a 25 right down on the ice cap. Got to come back in. Buzz.

He liked to buzz everything, you know. All those pilots. So we went to the reunion in Dayton, Ohio.

He and his wife came in the lobby, and I was sitting there. I went up there, and I pulled his jacket top, and I said, I said, Stake, aren't you still buzzing? He said, buzzing?

He said, I've never been buzzed. And I said, have you never? I said, look at the color of my hair.

So, but. But the Nenza B-29, the ones that they flew most of the missions, was Tokyo Rose. Was Tokyo Rose.

That was the name of our plane. Is that right? Yeah.

After a lot of that, Tokyo Rose was the name of the plane. Yeah. I've got a copy of it.

It belongs to Stake Lake. Oh, he had some fellow in college to write this. Operations of our outfit.

[Speaker 2]

Oh, called the Unity Outfit History, kind of.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. And I've got an extra copy at home. And I thought somebody wanted to kind of, you know, put in a book down here or something.

I'll try to get another copy when I need it.

[Speaker 2]

So look at your address and have them write to you about that.

[Speaker 1]

And then.

[Speaker 2]

He titled that copy.

[Speaker 1]

Eyes in the Sky is the title. And tells the whole thing of our outfit.

[Speaker 2]

Tells about your crash landing, too, on Sakai. Does that follow? Yeah.

You know about Japan, and I don't know, even when I was in college and even now people still say the controversy of dropping the atomic bomb on Japan. What's your feeling about that?

[Speaker 1]

Well.

[Speaker 2]

At the time, it has changed.

[Speaker 1]

People, the pilot on one of our planes came back and he told some of his friends and everything else that people were 90-mile radius up there and didn't know what they had. It was just so sad. But it lost a lot of Japanese life.

But the setup was that the United States was supposed to take on the mainland.

[Speaker 2]

Invaded Mainland.

[Speaker 1]

In November, and they got the atomic bomb in August, and that would have lost a lot of lives, too, both ways.

[Speaker 2]

Yes, it saved American lives.

[Speaker 1]

So it saved a lot of American lives. He says the time on Iwo Jima. Yeah, we came in here on three engines and had to land in Iwo Jima.

We tried to make it to Guam. After they took Iwo Jima, well, they hadn't taken it all because there was fighting on the north end of it when we were there, and I was there for nine days. They gave us a canteen of water in the morning, and that's for drinking water.

Your shower, shaving. Tell us how it got you into the Air Force and the airplane. What?

The airplane. Oh, well, the first night we were there, the gunner and I was sitting in the cockpit, all the way back, sitting out smoking. To be guarded.

[Speaker 2]

That's guard duty.

[Speaker 1]

We were sitting in the cockpit, and we didn't have any idea what was going to go on. All of a sudden we heard something go boom, and it seemed like a shooting star go up. We sat there.

I said, what was that? He said, I don't know. About that time, a trip flare is what it was.

It had a parachute on it. It would come down slow, and then all hell broke loose. Machine guns?

Machine guns. You had to get out of the night and try to find something to eat and everything. It hit these trip flares.

It went through the Constantino water.

[Speaker 2]

So you had the Japanese sneaking in and looking for it.

[Speaker 1]

To have something to eat. And, boy, we hit that thick patch. Never even hit the steps.

It got down behind the wheels. They had big wheels in there. I mean, you just watched the fireworks.

[Speaker 2]

Let the Marines do their job.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. The infantry was there. There were about a thousand hospital beds and all that.

They had that island completely undermined. The Japs did. There wasn't anything on top.

Well, there's a fighter's crib up there. Okay. They took the island.

The Seabees came in there in just no days at all. Made a runway for the 29th.

[Speaker 2]

Uh-huh.

[Speaker 1]

And I watched it on the tube last night. They had filmed it. And the Valkyrie of Ash is about that deep.

And Mount Suribachi was on one end of it. That's when we were siphoning. Well, siphon, the B-24s, would take off every evening before dawn.

And they'd go up there for 60-some odd days before they invaded. To bomb. And they would go up there and drop their bomb load and come back and everything.

And then they lost all their lives at Iwo Jima. It was the Seabee Battalion in there that hit the shore. I mean, they had this big gun.

It was up on Suribachi. And it had doors that opened up. And they had a rail gun that would come out.

And they'd fire four or five times at the landing. And then they'd pull it back on the track and shut the doors. And they had all their vines and stuff on the doors.

And the fighters couldn't tell where all the fire was coming from.

[Speaker 2]

Interesting. So when you were at Iwo, you went into some of these tunnels that the Japanese had dug. Did you talk about that?

[Speaker 1]

No, I didn't go in any. But I did find a buddy of mine. We found him on the beach there at Saipan.

And the Japs had tunnels back in there. And we'd go in there one day and I found a Jap flag. And I still got it.

But they had a 1,000-boat hospital under that island. And they had just tunnels. Just like rats.

And radio rooms. And they had 100-pound bags of rice.

[Speaker 2]

Like a whole underground city.

[Speaker 1]

And that's what it was. And they had 100-pound bags of rice that they had. Stored up and everything like that.

And they poured gas all over that. So they couldn't use it. And that's the reason they were out hunting something to eat.

They had their eyes.

[Speaker 2]

How do you think that your experience in World War II... You went off the military one boy, one kind of person. Did you come back and change in some ways?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. I was older. Older.

Wiser. Four years.

[Speaker 2]

Did it change your attitude about anything?

[Speaker 1]

Not really. I grew it up a lot probably. Well, yeah.

I was more mature, I would say. And came back in the American War. I've been putting them together for six, three years.

[Speaker 2]

Oh, my goodness.

[Speaker 1]

Congratulations for that.

[Speaker 2]

What do you... You were talking about the legacies of World War II. What do you most want the coming generations to understand about World War II?

[Speaker 1]

Well, I'd say the United States isn't very lucky. They never had any destruction and death from war. Not here.

Not here at home. Well, at home or... In the United States, you know.

Anywhere in the United States. They haven't had any death. And they're not lucky.

Because it's not...

[Speaker 2]

You've seen what war can do, don't you?

[Speaker 1]

Not something to look at. But I'm thankful.

[Speaker 2]

Do you think the fighting was worth it?

[Speaker 1]

Well, yes, I'd say it was. Because I can't see the United States. Of course, they're taking over automobile industry here in the United States.

But that's what makes it mad, you know. Because they're more or less giving these land now over here to do all these things.

[Speaker 2]

They're benefiting us.

[Speaker 1]

And here, I mean, and here they follow them over there, aren't we?

[Speaker 2]

Everybody does that.

[Speaker 1]

And it's kind of the opposite.

[Speaker 2]

It changes things.

[Speaker 1]

Yes, I'd say it was worth it. Although, I don't think war is the complete answer to everything. But it has to be, I would say.

You were just serving your country. I didn't understand what I signed for. Doing your job.

Trying to do it. But I had... We had a lot of good times.

And I had a lot of bad times. And I asked that, you know, like when he crash landed. And then when he saved the guy's life and all that.

Why he never got any medals, you know, for that. And he said he wasn't worried about getting medals. He was worried about getting all that.

[Speaker 2]

About doing a lot of jobs.

[Speaker 1]

And doing his job was the best he knew how to do. We just done what we had to do.

[Speaker 2]

You just want to come home alive.

[Speaker 1]

And there are probably a lot of guys that are like that, too. Oh, sure. Well, there's still...

I heard on the television. There's still giving out medals and stuff. 40, 50 years ago.

You know. But I've done what I had to do. I'm glad.

Bruce. He comes to one of our meetings. It's Morgan.

Morgan. And he's going to be in his wife. That's the first time I've seen him since we had the plane crash.

[Speaker 2]

He said he's been looking for you for 40 something. Isn't that something? The years just dropped away.

[Speaker 1]

I don't know if he's always in there.

[Speaker 2]

Isn't that... Pretty intense time as you're growing up.

[Speaker 1]
Pardon?

[Speaker 2]
Pretty intense time to grow up.

[Speaker 1]
Yes, it was. Yes, but I got to see the world. And everything.

You got to do a lot of things. I'm really thankful.

[Speaker 2]
You went almost all the way around the world.

[Speaker 1]
Yeah. All the way to Indiana. Five degrees in and out the world.

[Speaker 2]
Isn't that something?

[Speaker 1]
I love it.

[Speaker 2]
Five degrees.

[Speaker 1]
We went to the continent of China. Took the Philippines over the Spice Attack. And then when we'd fly from Marianas, we'd come out over the Sea of Japan.

If we'd come on down the coast, we could've been to the continent. We got as far as Vladivostok, Russia. And that was our point there in case we had trouble to bail out or anything like that.

We were supposed to try to make it to Vladivostok. And we flew over at one time. I called the engineer and asked him if there wasn't something he could do to claim that we'd have to bail out.

And I got a letter from Cliff, my fellow bluster gunner. Sent me those pictures. He said the engineer, they couldn't find him after the crash landing.

And they found him. He was sitting at his table there in the navigator's department trying to find out where in hell all the gas went.

[Speaker 2]
Oh, my God. What a time.

[Speaker 1]
But then he was talking about that particular incident where they were down below the cliff. When he looked out the blister, he said he prayed like he'd never prayed before. Oh, boy.

And he said it just felt like a hand had lifted him up. Yeah, I told that little fellow, I don't know what he was meaning.

[Speaker 2]

It must have been like an updraft.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, it must have been kind of like an updraft, you know, right there next to me. And I guess it just picked him up, more or less. It hit the top of him.

It hit the top of him, but then it was both runways.

[Speaker 2]

No, that's amazing. That's a miracle.

[Speaker 1]

It is, it is, it is. But that doesn't make it pretty, does it? There was some concrete coming up, and they were coming up fast.

Too fast, huh? And I just thought, well, this is going to be it, you know.

[Speaker 2]

And who was your pilot on that?

[Speaker 1]

Boris. Boris. Walter Boris.

He's still living. He's still living, yeah.

[Speaker 2]

You're lucky to have a lot. It means you have a lot of your crew members still.

[Speaker 1]

They have six. Six out of 11. Yeah.

Yeah. But he's got pictures you wouldn't believe of the bomb bays that had opened up. And they were dropped with bombs, like on the, you know, Tokyo and incinerator runs.

You just wouldn't believe the picture. He's got a museum, I mean, in a box. I'm trying to get my scrapbook together now, after all these years.

[Speaker 2]

Must be a good legacy for us, you know. I know, I know. And the generations to come.

You know, we're going to start pulling together here real quick.

[Speaker 1]

Okay.

[Speaker 2]

But you know what? Is there anything that we haven't talked about that you want to include on the story? Because you've heard the stories.

[Speaker 1]

You know, that's pretty well covered, I think.

[Speaker 2]

Well, I appreciate it so much. You know, it takes a lot of courage what you did, even though you just said you were doing your job.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah.

[Speaker 2]

You know?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah.

[Speaker 2]

And it takes a lot of courage, I think, to sit down and share those stories, you know?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, it's pretty hard sometimes to go talk about something.

[Speaker 2]

He's so emotional.

[Speaker 1]

It shows you've got a warm heart. I know. Every reunion we go to now, so many are losing, you know.

Yeah. I counted the other day. I think it was 305 of our convicts already passed away.

So, you know, I mean, we lost some planes and crews over there. But I'm thankful.

[Speaker 2]

He just celebrated his 80th birthday. Your 80th? It's not 80.

You may feel 80, but you don't look 80.

[Speaker 1]

I don't look 80. Oh, yeah.

[Speaker 2]

That sounds to me.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah.

[Speaker 2]

What a genius of genius. Isn't that something?

[Speaker 1]

He sure doesn't look 80, really.

[Speaker 2]

I appreciate you sharing your story. I appreciate you doing this for others. You know, every generation needs to be taught.

[Speaker 1]

I wanted to come in and tell you, you know. Yeah, otherwise I'd have been on my way home.

[Speaker 2]

You keep recording everything.

[Speaker 1]

I am.

[Speaker 2]

You're videotaping.

[Speaker 1]

We are.

[Speaker 2]

You're videotaping. That's just the most wonderful thing. This concludes the interview.