

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

YSU Combat Veterans Project

World War II Experience

O. H. 155

JAMES W. FREY

Interviewed

by

Mark D. Dittmer

on

November 24, 1978

JAMES WILLIAM FREY

James William Frey was born to Mr. and Mrs. William E. and Gladys N. Frey on April 27, 1922 in Cleveland, Ohio. He was educated in the Cleveland Heights School System and graduated from Cleveland Heights High School in 1939. Frey went to Colgate University in 1940 and completed his A.B. in 1942 prior to being accepted in the Army Air Force Program in the summer of 1942.

During World War II Frey fought in the 90th Heavy Bombardment Unit--otherwise known as the Jolly Rogers--in the South Pacific. From March of 1944 until 1945, he flew more than 64 combat missions in New Guinea and the Philippines; until the end of the war, Frey trained new pilots for the Air Force.

In 1945 James Frey went back to school and received his Law Degree from Harvard Law School in 1948. While in graduate school he married Barbara H. Frey. In 1948 the Frey family returned to Warren, Ohio where Mr. Frey helped establish the corporate attorney firm of Hoppe, Frey, Hewitt and Milligan.

Mr. and Mrs. Frey are the parents of four children,¹¹ Deborah, Katherine, Nancy, and J. William Frey. They are members of the First Presbyterian Church of Warren, Ohio. Mr. Frey takes an active interest in Warren community affairs and serves on the Warren Chamber of Commerce and

various other social affiliations. His hobbies are fishing, golfing, and collecting stamps.

Mark D. Dittmer

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D: This is an interview with Mr. James William Frey for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program by Mark D. Dittmer at 861 Melwood Drive N.E. Warren, Ohio on November 24, 1978 at 3:00 p.m. The topic for discussion is World War II Combat Veterans.

The first thing I'd like to ask you Mr. Frey is for you to go back prior to 1941 and more or less evaluate what you were doing, your background, and more or less give me an opinion of what you thought of the war in Europe.

F: I was a student in college at Colgate University in 1940 and shortly after the war was declared, I enlisted in the Army Air Force. Public opinion I don't think was all that strong at that time about where we stood. The country had just come out of a Depression. I think most of the kids in college at that time were cognizant of that and were more interested in getting ahead themselves by, be it college or otherwise, and qualifying to work.

I think the propaganda at that time was such that there wasn't any real strong anti-German feeling and certainly little, if any feeling with regard to the Japanese. Although, the atrocity stories coming out of China were such that no one could accept, but not to the extent that we were, as a group, interested in fighting any war over it; something going on over in China or even with the Jews in Germany.

And certainly, at least personally, I had no real pre-

conceived notions of how bad Hitler was, because there was a lot of propaganda as to the good things he had done--he brought Germany out of a severe depression and made it a vigorous economy. In doing so, you'd heard the stories about how the Jews were handled.

Of course, when the war started in Europe, I think our feelings started to shift. There were the usual atrocity stories of the Germans' invasion of the low countries, Norway, and even before that, their participation with Finland in stopping Russia. That part, the American country was very much in favor of, the Finnish in that war, but it switched to the low countries and the invasion of France and what have you. Then, very definitely, I think our country became aware and people in college became aware that something had to be done to stop them. But at all times, our thinking of stopping them was to supply others to do the fighting.

I don't think many of us had any concept that we would be dragged into the war with the philosophy in our country, political philosophy, that we would never be brought into another foreign war. We were, I think, and I was, somewhat of an isolationist; not as much as a lot of my friends, but certainly I had no great sympathies for England until she got fire-bombed and everything.

And the things leading up to Pearl Harbor were--I think, at that time I really never comprehended and made no effort to comprehend what the problems were with Japan in our negotiations with them. All I can recall is that we put an embargo on scrap and then, of course, the Japanese could not proceed as fast as they wanted in building a military might. In no conceivable way did I think or ever hear of anyone else think that there would be a possibility of a war with Japan; that that war would be limited to China and not bother us.

And that's about all I can say about the period preceding the war.

D: Where were you on December 7, and what do you remember?

F: As I recall, it was a Sunday. I know it was a Sunday and I think a bunch of us were in a local movie theater in Hamilton, New York. We came out and we heard about this and it was very unbelieving. I know as soon as it happened that my reaction, and a lot of others' were--enlist right away. Since I had a great desire to fly, I wanted to enlist in the Army Air Force, which

I withheld at my parent's request until June of 1942. Then I enlisted, I think it was, June 22, 1942.

D: Okay, you went in in June of 1942. Can you recall the day you were called in?

F: I enlisted and I was sworn in to the Army Air Corps in June of 1942. Then I had to wait in college until my orders came through for training because in those days, the Air Corps Training Program was so filled up they couldn't take men; but I passed my physicals and everything so that I was inducted. And I waited until January of 1943 before I got my orders, which were to report first to Fort Thomas, and then to Kelly Field at San Antonio, Texas. And we went by a troop train down there. I started my Air Force training at that time.

D: What was your training period like?

F: The Army Air Corps had a very, very strict military discipline. We spent an hour, at least, a day, marching and what have you. We were very, very good marchers, a very elite group, as a marching group, in any parade or anything we held. We had a least two hours of physical training every day. Sometimes it was extended beyond that. We had classroom studies for about five hours a day, maybe even more; because the only time off we had between getting up at 5:00 in the morning and taps at 10:00 or 11:00 was a breakfast period and lunch period and then one hour after dinner in which we were allowed to go to the PX, the Public Exchange, where we could buy an ice cream cone or something of that sort. But even going to and from the PX from our barracks, we had to march at attention et cetera.

So, it was a very rigid military training program. It was a quick one. We were there longer than the Army ones were. They were ninety day wonders. We had a nine-month training period, normally it would be, but of course, that's a lot of classroom training, flying training, plus, as I say, the physical training and military training part of the program.

D: Was learning how to fly easy?

F: No, it wasn't difficult to start with. I had never been in a plane. I hadn't even touched an airplane before I went in the Air Force. We had three grades. We had primary training, which went for about two or three months; then we had basic training, another two

or three months and then advanced training. This was our flying training.

And going back a bit, when we came in, we took classification tests to see what we were qualified for, whether it be a bombardier, navigator, or pilot. I qualified in all three areas, and I had elected the pilot training. Then in pilot school after about seven hours of flying, I ruptured my appendix when I was flying and spent over thirty days in the hospital, during which time I was in critical shape, part of the time anyway. When I came out, they gave me a half hour to solo a plane, which I didn't do, so I was washed out as a pilot; went back for reclassification, which I was very much opposed to.

I wanted to get into, then, the infantry and start fighting, but was prevailed upon by, I think it was a colonel of a reviewing staff of officers, to go into navigation. So, I went to navigation school and that transferred me down to Hondo, Texas and I graduated in January of 1944 from navigation school.

I was, if not the top man in my class, one of the top three or four. I'm basing that on grading in the classroom. There wasn't any real grading in flying except that you had to perform and I always did that quite well.

Then when I completed the training, we were given a two-week leave to go home. It was an in-transit thing because we had orders cut as to where to go and I was sent out to Muroc, California, Muroc Air Base in the desert.

That's an interesting thing, too, because we were allowed, at least I know I was given the [choice of] which theater we wanted to go into and I picked the Pacific. Not for any love of the Pacific, but the reasons I gave, which were accepted, was that I am of German origin and I was concerned about what my feelings might be in combat if I thought maybe this was some relative I might be shooting or someone related to me. So, there were very few that chose the Pacific, and I was one.

I then went to Muroc, California where crews were formed with pilots, bombardier. We received gunners from gunnery training, flight engineers, who had gone to other training centers for their particular skills, and we flew training flights out of Muroc, California,

which would take us out over the ocean. We were doing so called sub-patrol. It really wasn't. We were just really flying together. There wasn't any real threat of any subs or anything. We also flew cross country flights. And a lot of gunnery training. I forget the length of time now. I think it was roughly, two months until it was considered that we were qualified to go overseas.

From there we were shipped north to San Francisco. The Air Base was Susan Fairfield or something like that. Now we were given a new B-24 bomber and we took it out on test hops to make sure everything was synchronized and coordinated, et cetera. And then we took off for Honolulu, Hickam Field. I forget what day it was we took off. I think it was in the latter part of March or early April. That particular flight is the longest over-water flight you can make, and I navigated that thing and it was 21,007 miles, which was a long range for any plane. The B-24 was the longest range plane we had in existence in those days.

D: How long did that take?

F: Something like fifteen hours, fourteen hours, flying.

And we had a funny experience, the copilot and I had gone into town to see an old friend of mine from Cleveland, Ohio. This girl was living out there and I knew it, so we decided we'd go in to see her and we weren't actually permitted off the base, but, being officers, all we had to do was show our ID's and we could get off the base anytime. So, we went into town and played around and got in very late in the morning, about 3:00 in the morning; and we were awakened at 4:30 to say we had to take off at 6:00 in the morning. So, the copilot and I had about an hour and a half of sleep at most.

And we took off, and one of the copilot's jobs on take-offs is regulating the fuel intake into the engines. When you get to altitude then you start thinning down in the mixture, reducing the amount of gasoline going through the engines. And I guess in his sleepiness he forgot to do so because when we got about halfway across the ocean, the pilot called to me and said, "What's our E.T.A.--estimated time of arrival--to Hickam?" And I gave it to him. He said, "What would be our estimated time of arrival to go back to San Francisco?", and it was almost identical. So, we were in trouble, being our gas supply was very short. Our engineer said he

didn't know whether we could make it or not.

We had secret flight orders which gave us a radio frequency of picket ships that sat between Frisco and Hawaii and we alerted all three of them. They kept checking with us, and our radio operator was very, very busy that evening. We arrived in Hickam in the early morning, about 10:00 I think it was; I forget now, but it was early morning. And coming into Hickam, because of its terrible tragedy there a year or so earlier, each day the pattern of the plane flying in there--even though we had identification signals, we had to fly a certain pattern, and if you didn't, you were liable to get shot down.

So, we had to call to the tower at Hickam and ask for emergency landing instructions. We asked to be permitted to go straight in without going through the programmed evasive action because we were low on fuel, which they granted us. And I remember very distinctly, looking down going across the harbor; all the guns were trained on us by some of the cruisers and destroyers in the harbor.

And we went in very high so that when we started down, we would have the momentum of our ship carrying us down. We lost one engine as we started to descend from about 2,500 feet. As we started to level out and to stall the plane, we landed. We lost another engine. We landed with two engines, went down to the end of the runway and by that time a third engine conked out and so we moved the plane with one engine down the strip into a revetment area, which was a mounded area around the place where the planes sat so if bombs were dropped, the fragments would not hit the planes. As we did that, the fourth engine conked out. They mechanically had to tow us into position in the revetment area because of that.

So, then we spent a day and a half in Hickam Field, and we went in and saw Honolulu. Then two days later we resumed our trip to Australia. We went on through several islands, the names of which are not all that interesting, but we landed in Guadalcanal and then we ended up in Townsville, Australia. That's where we stayed until we got our orders to go north and join our combat outfit in New Guinea.

D: Do you want to go into your combat experience, your high points?

Well, I don't know that there are any high points. Combat flying is--each mission is something in itself. The main thing in the Pacific I think, was the absolutely horrible living conditions under which man was required to live. The temperature would be, on an average, I would say, 110 degrees in the rainy season, which we were in when we landed in New Guinea, came north to New Guinea. The rainy season was on then, so it was constantly raining. We slept in tents, which, with the rain, the stakes kept pulling out at times, and what have you. It was so hot, all we ever wore was our shorts, underwear shorts, and our shoes because of the mud, and our web belt on which we carried our .45 revolver, which were standard issue.

We ate in mess halls. The same was true when we got to our combat unit, which was a little further north of New Guinea, Nadzab, New Guinea. We first landed in Port Moresby.

And each time we flew it was always something different. The weather was as big an enemy as the Japanese ever were. At the particular first base I flew out of, Nadzab, New Guinea was in the Markum River Valley. We had to circle in a very tight circle climbing up to an altitude of 13,000 feet because of the mountains. We could not go off straight and level and fly off in one direction or another because of the mountains. We just circled upward; all of the planes.

The squadrons, one after another, came up. We formed above the clouds and then went on to our targets. Of course, over the targets, we always got an awful lot of flack. We used to say it was so thick you could walk on it. We'd get our plane shot up from time to time.

And during this period of flying, from the time at Muroc, California, I had told my crew that I would fly with them as long as I became a pilot on that plane. So, I became, as far as our crew was concerned, copilot, and flew the plane most of the time in combat until over the target, where I had some very specific duties of opening the bomb bays and watching and plotting where the bombs dropped.

D: When you were first there, what kind of position did the Japanese have? Did they have more or less, control of the South Seas?

F: Well, the Japanese were very much in control of all of

all of New Guinea and, of course, all of the Philip-pines; everything behind us. We moved from the east to the west. Port Moresby is on the southeast coast of New Guinea. Some very serious battles had been fought there, the Battle of Port Moresby Bay between land troops, to hold the Japanese out. The Owen-Stanley Mountains divides the north from southern New Guinea. There were some very bloody battles across the Owen-Stanley Mountains, primarily with Australian ground troops and the Japanese.

By the time I went into combat, we controlled Finchhaven and Lae, which were on the northeastern coast of New Guinea, and this base from which I flew at Nadzab, which was about, oh, I'd say, 75 miles west of Finchhaven and that was the advanced combat base.

We weren't harassed very much at night, I don't recall, at least at Nadzab, never having Japanese bombers attack at night. But to the immediate north of us was a very strong Japanese base with--I forget which Japanese Army it was--but they were at Wewak. And further to the west was a place called Sarmi Island and the Hollandia, which was on the mainland east of Sarmi.

We participated in the first raids on Hollandia, got badly shot up a couple times on those raids. This was the first of the hedge-hopping campaign maneuvers of MacArthur, by which we completely bypassed this large Japanese army at Wewak by moving west and landing at Hollandia. He secured that, he secured the air base at Sarmi or this little island of Sarmi; the air strip of which or the length of which I know to be 4,800 feet. It wasn't even that. It was 4,600 feet. We cleared that and made a runway there and we landed in there in about--well the island was supposedly secured--it was about D plus five I guess, when we landed there.

We slept under the wings of the plane. We dug slit trenches in the coral. Coral is about the hardest thing you'd want to ever dig. You dig it with a pick. You get bloody hands, but the Japanese bombers bombed us every night when we were there. We later moved into tents and they continued to bomb every night. There was always at least one Betty bomber who came in every night. Sometimes there was several of them.

They never did much extensive damage. Why--I don't know. At least, none of our planes on the ground were ever damaged, planes that I flew. There were planes

that were damaged, but they didn't do much heavy damage. They were really a nuisance to keep us up all night. That was about it.

We got sniped at. I got sniped at at Sarmi. I got sniped at at Biak Island, which was the next place further to the west, which was in the Galiruk Bay of western New Guinea. We flew out of there, missions to the Balikpapan oil refineries. The Japanese there, the fighters, dropped phosphorous bombs on us and got about three of them, I guess, out of our group.

D: What kind of bomb was that?

F: It's a bomb that just burns. As soon as air hits it, it burns like mad. Phosphorous just--well, it's like your matches are made out of phosphorous. A great big top, which has got some wax or something on; air hits that. That's what causes it to burn.

I remember at Biak, which is the largest island I think I flew off of other than New Guinea, which is I guess, the largest island in the world. One time on D-Day in the Philippines--I should say out of Biak--we bombed, made the first missions into the Philippine Islands. Some of the names, I can point them out on the map to you, but I can't remember all the names; Halmahera Island, what have you, we did all those bombings.

There was nothing in front of us. There was nothing friendly between our base and our target. And our missions were, on an average, I would say, twelve hour missions and 90% over water.

At one time, Biak, after the invasion of the Philippines was made, we got a request for--they needed men to take in supplies and take wounded out of Mindoro Island and someone volunteered that I be one of them. There was quite a few of us and we went in a DC-3, a small troop transporter and we had a great time. In Leyte Island, where we landed, initially that had been secured so called, but the Japanese came in and strafed us on the air strip. I remember lying behind some little fragile log, hoping it didn't hit me. It went right across me and I did not get hit.

The next day we went into Mondoro Island to take in supplies in these DC-3's. We got jumped on by Japanese fighters on the way in. We got jumped on as we started to come out. We had to turn around and land back on the base. I watched probably one of the most vivid

dog-fights amongst about forty planes you ever saw. The Japanese Zero's going up and down and our P-38's following them up and down, but we got back out of there all right.

Then we eventually were based in this Mindoro Island. We moved our base there, started bombing Corregidor, various parts of the northern Luzon Island in the Philippines and then we started the first daylight raids on Formosa, which was the Japanese bastion in the Pacific. It was their staging area. They had their plants, what have you. They had all of our prisoners of war there--not all of them, but a lot. General Wainwright, who was the man to whom MacArthur turned over the command of Corregidor, was a prisoner in the northern part of Formosa Island.

Our bombing missions always required three targets, because we were absolutely required to bomb in the clear. We were not allowed to use our radar bomb sights to drop because the Japanese put the American Prisoner of War camps in their target areas, so we had to be very, very careful of the pattern in which we flew the bombs, dropped them and made so everything was visual.

That created problems for us because Japanese had very good radar activated anti-aircraft, ack-ack. We tried all sorts of tricks to throw that off, but we couldn't do much. Once we came in on a target run, they'd have our altitude pretty well picked up. If we went back around because the cloud cover or something, they would be right on us.

One of our tricks was that we'd move in about 1,500 feet higher than our bombing altitude and then drop very fast and then turn over the target. If the bombardier took more than 25 seconds to get on the target and drop the bombs, we were in trouble. So, you had to move very fast.

Air force crews were a very integrated group. The rank meant absolutely nothing, not withstanding our training. In training in the states we would be very militaristic. There was none of that. The lowest private was the same level as an officer. That doesn't mean to say they were disrespectful in any way. For example, if the gunner says that we ought to do something--he knew what he was talking about generally--and we did it although it might be a major who was flying the plane. By the same token, we told them to do

something, they did it automatically because they were well trained. So, it was a mutual admiration society, you might say, amongst our crew. Each one was convinced of the qualifications of the other men and we'd test them out. We had been flying together now for--oh, by time I first flew combat--a year or six months at least.

As a matter of fact, when we first came north into combat, I wasn't allowed to fly with my crew. I had to fly as a navigator for an experienced crew that had been out on maybe twenty missions. I flew as their navigator for about eight or ten missions. The same is true of the pilot of our crew. He flew with another crew as a copilot. We were the only two, so, when our crew was formed to go into combat, our old crew joined us. There were two experienced men, the pilot and the navigator. After two or three missions, you were a veteran crew. So, we were a good unit. I ended up with something like 64 combat missions.

We had a system of how you went back, got rotated back to the States. You had to get one hundred points. Each ten hours was a point for combat flying. Each time you got hit was another point, by ack-ack I'm thinking about, or by a plane; and you got, I think, three points if you were jumped by Japanese fighters without any air cover of your own.

And unfortunately, I had had the most experience, for reasons that really aren't important. Several crews had gone back, so they kept me on because I was the experienced one. They didn't keep my pilot on for that long. I went with another crew and was a group leader, but I stayed on a lot longer than most men had to stay on because of that.

D: What was the name of your band or . . . ?

F: Well, our group was the 90th Heavy Bombardment Group. I was known as the "Jolly Rogers". We had a skull and crossbones on our twin tail fins. According to the captured Japanese, they respected us very much. We were a very good group.

As a matter of fact, there were other heavy bombardment groups in the area and they took losses far greater than ours; and I attribute that to two things. We trained our men better, but I think the main reason was, some people had a notion that a B-24 should go in on a bombing mission at 20,000 feet. 18,000 to 20,000

is where the long range anti-aircraft gun is extremely accurate. We flew, always tried to fly, at 12,000 feet because we were out of the medium range ack-ack and, the long range ack-ack could not be very accurate at that range. We had ack-ack always, all around us, but they really weren't hitting into us. Only on one mission I was on did we lose a plane; actually go down as a result of ack-ack. We'd go over the same target that the 7th Air Force would go over and they would lose two or three planes, we'd lose none. I don't know that that's the reason for it or not or maybe we were just plain lucky.

D: What was your opinion of the Japanese Air Force and how much respect did you have for them?

F: Well, any guy, even a little kid, put them behind a gun in a plane and you're going to have respect for anyone. If you ask how good they were, really, I guess, by reading subsequent history, the good ones apparently were pretty well knocked off before, actually, we got up there; but we had the greatest respect for them.

We did have episodes where I don't know what happened. I remember over Formosa one time, out of the sun came this plane. I caught a glimpse of it, so I was able to call over the command speakers to all the planes that we were under attack. No one saw it until it went by us actually, and it was a small zero. We reported in and it was, apparently, one of the first sighted. It was some experimental plane they had flying at us, but we didn't have all that much fire attack on us.

Our big danger, I mean, most common danger, was the anti-aircraft and we had the greatest respect for that. The Japanese really knew how to use that ack-ack. They did throw that stuff up. I can't give you anything really, comparative to the Japanese Air Force. You don't sit and evaluate, "Do we have a tough opponent or do we have an easy opponent?" They're throwing lead at you and you operate accordingly and you don't relax.

D: Okay. Turning to another phase of the war. Could you recall Tokyo Rose and what effect she had on the people in the South Seas?

F: Yes, she was delightful. We used to always--when we were coming back from a long mission, we'd get the radio operator to switch onto Tokyo Rose. She was very interesting. She would report, "The Jolly Rogers

has bombed such and such a place. We the Japanese knocked down three planes." We look around and we can't see three planes missing. (Laughter) She always had a story, but there were a couple of experiences which were very disconcerting.

One time, in the early part of my combat days, we got some fresh vegetables in; keeping in mind, in the jungle, there is no fresh fruit of any sort. Some plane coming out of Australia brought some vegetables back. So, we had a salad or something that night. And Tokyo Rose asked, by name of a pilot, a captain in our outfit, how he enjoyed his salad last night. How she knew he was there and how she knew we had salad, what have you, I, to this day don't know, but it was rather intriguing.

As far as she's concerned, she was full of baloney. She always played very pretty type of music we loved that we hadn't heard for a long time. We hadn't seen women for over a year and what have you. It was very enjoyable listening to her, but she had no effect whatsoever on . . .

D: Do you think she'd have more effect on the artillery than she would on the Air Corps?

F: I don't think it made a bit of difference. Of course, by the time I got there, that's another thing that's different from some of the guys earlier. We had-- by that time--had confidence that we were going to win. Our old saying was, "Golden Gate in '48", so our thinking was not in terms that we were going to get home by 1945. We thought we were in there for a long time, but we thought we could win.

We were extremely prideful of our abilities and we were extremely proud of the equipment we flew. Like the B-24, if anyone would have said that wasn't the best ship in those days, I would have hit them on the head. We convinced ourselves that our plane, that our planes were superior as far as range and ability to carry loads of bombs compared to the B-17, which did no combat flying to speak of other than in the early days of the war, simply because of their short range. But we thought our equipment was the best.

We were very disgruntled with General MacArthur at all times because he sent us bombs and he sent us gasoline and bully beef and spam; but our food was absolutely horrible. But MacArthur was a--well, I don't know what to say about him. I guess, as a general, at

at that time, we considered him very fine. We never questioned the ability of our senior officers and their planning. We did get very upset with the fact, for example, MacArthur allowed no liquor in New Guinea. You couldn't bring it up from Australia. You wouldn't send it north. There's all sorts of liquor in Australia.

D: Did you smuggle it in or . . . ?

F: Well, it got to the point I think, when you went on combat rest leave, you were allowed to bring back some. At least, they never stopped you. I remember, I had brought a gunny sack back when I came from combat rest leave loaded with wine. Come to think of it, I couldn't bring any liquor, I had wine. I could bring wine back. Oh, in mid-1944 or late, about September 1944, MacArthur relented and allowed us to have beer.

So, we were supposed to get, I think it was, 24 cans of beer a month. The most I ever got I think, was six cans in a month and that wasn't his problem because the supply depots, way behind the lines, these quartermaster's staff, were drinking all the beer and sending a few cases up to us, which got us very upset with the people behind the lines, too.

There's another part in this that was true probably of all the services. The combat tested man considers himself a very elite person, very smart, knew what he was going on and had no use for the rear echelon "ground pounders". Particularly because, like here, stealing our beer, the food, I don't know whether--oh, my folks, they would send packages. Half of them would be raided. Some of them never got to us. They didn't just get lost. Someone saw some nice cookies coming through and decided to have it with the beer he's drinking.

But as far as MacArthur was concerned, I just think-- I don't mean to say his priorities were wrong, because I think they were right--the gasoline and bombs we had to have to keep us going.

The Navy, you've got the Naval unit, they ate like kings. Of course, they had the refrigerated things on their boats, their ships, what have you. But we had nothing cold. If you can imagine going a year without anything cold, never seeing an ice cube or anything close to it. We were lucky, by flying, if we had a can of beer, we would take it up on our mission and fly at 12,000 or 14,000 feet. That beer will get cold so when you get down to the ground, you had a

nice cold can of beer and you better drink it in a hurry or it will be warm again.

What else can I bore you with on this subject that I haven't thought about for years?

D: I'd like you to get into the D-Day in the Philippines.

F: The 5th Air Force did not participate in the D-Day at Leyte Island, where D-Day took place. Samar and Leyte were the two islands, but it was Leyte that took the beating. That was a Naval operation. We came in later.

Later on, however, we participated in various D-Day operations at Mindanao Island, which is a southern island of the Philippines. We provided the air cover for that. Now, it was an awesome sight to see the big American battleships, cruisers. I remember seeing the Battleship Texas, was one of the smaller ones, really, but I saw it up close one time. They were in this and there would be the destroyers ahead and you'd start seeing the LCT's, the landing crafts, starting to approach in their zig-zag pattern.

And from the Air Force standpoint, the first ones over dropping bombs were the B-25's. They'd come in and drop at the shore. The B-24's would come in following them normally, and bomb starting further in. So, we did that and there was one--I guess it was near Samar Island, I forget, it was the island to the west from Samar and Leyte Island. We participated in one of those.

We'd just lay a pattern of bombs down. You didn't know what you were hitting. You didn't know what was there. It just looked like a jungle and what have you. But the idea was just to bomb the whole area and hopefully I guess, knock off the troops.

We did the same thing up in--not Corregidor, they never bombed that way at Corregidor. They took that by parachute. We tried to bomb Corregidor out of the water. We bombed that twice a day. It was only an hour mission from our base. We'd just drop bombs and come back, get another load and go back again. We dropped a lot of bombs, but apparently it didn't do much good because when paratroopers landed there, they had it pretty rough. They found a lot of Japanese still alive.

But we did do it in, oh, the Naval Base north of Corregidor, I forget now, its name.

D: Turning, more or less, to tactics of the war, how well informed were you of your missions and as far as aspects of the war on the whole, because a lot of soldiers weren't too well informed.

F: We were probably better able to see or visualize what was going on. We were flying. We had maps of the whole Pacific area. At least, I never had any problem understanding what we were doing. I mean, we could see, and it was pretty obvious to all of us, like, going back to the beginning of the campaigns in which I flew in, our bypassing the Japanese; we knew the Japanese, that whole army was starving up there. They had no way of getting supplies. Well that seemed like a good thing. Rather than sending a bunch of guys in to get killed or kill off them, let them starve there. They couldn't get at us. If they did, we would have dropped enough bombs on them, they would not have wanted to try to get at us or too far away.

We knew about the Hedge-hopping campaign, and it seemed like a real smart one. We never discussed it with any great detail, but we all understood it. We understood the desire to get back to the Philippines. The Philippine people were very unusual people in many ways. They had been--well, in our early missions in the Philippines, we had secret orders with regards to all the guerilla bands. You'd hear a lot about the guerilla's as being very staunch Americans. Well they weren't. It was, who's going to win?

There were guerilla bands in which former American Soldiers--we understood it from these reports-- were in those bands, that they were unreliable. If we'd get shot down, we were to contact them immediately and ask them to bring help and then move at least a half-mile away where we could watch and see what they brought back, whether they brought back Filipinos or they brought back a bunch of Japanese soldiers. As we got better and it became obvious--after the landings at Leyte at least--we were going to win, or certainly we were a strong military force, then they became more and more helpful.

I recognized the mission of freeing the Philippines. I had an experience, after I finished my missions and was waiting for orders to go back, I went on a special mission up to Clark Field in Luzon, which was being

fixed up for an air base. I went down to Manila with the company commander of the First Americale Division and another guy from that outfit, a sergeant, and I don't know how it came about, but we were invited to the home of Senator Quezon. I think that was his name. He was a very well known one. Went to his home, his wife was there and several other dignitaries and their wives and we walked in and I'm carrying a .45 on my hip and they wanted to take that from me and I said, "No thank you. I'll hang on to it." They served us fried bananas. I don't know what the occasion was. I presume this guy from Americale Division had some purpose for being there and we were just going along. Because of the Philippine's helping of Japan, I considered them traitors. They were nice people, what I saw of the Filipinos. They were very nice.

Of course, you went to these night clubs in Manila at the particular time I'm talking about, I think they were trying to get the American soldier for everything he had, but they weren't very successful. As a matter of fact, I think they got in a lot of trouble when they tried to cheat the American Soldiers because they were all combat veterans and they just wouldn't take it. The MP's had, I think, some problems from time to time straightening out the social proprietor of the bar, what have you, of the American Soldiers. I'm not all that familiar with it because I only spent a few days there.

- D: Turning to the end of the war, where were you when they decided to drop the bombs?
- F: I was rotated to the States in May of 1945, by which time the war, as far as the Air Force is concerned, it was pretty obvious we didn't need all of the flyers. I had an option to go back and take training in B-29's and fly further missions over Japan or get out of the service. I initially elected to stay in the service because we got a month's rest-leave in Santa Anna in California, which I understand was just a real wonderful place. The type of thing when we were in the jungle we dreamed about with all the girls and liquor and the food. They just wined and dined you and gave you a real good thirty days. So, I thought that was great and it was worth another mission, another tour duty. But then someone blew a whistle and I saw a whole bunch of guys run out and jump into line and at attention and everything and I said, "Let me out of this outfit." So, I left in May of 1945 and went on terminal leave and it expired in August.

I went up to Bobcaygeon, Ontario Canada with my father who hadn't had a vacation during the entire war. Went fishing, had to go by train because, remember, there was gasoline rationing. And we were up there, which was the first of August was when they dropped the first atomic bomb, which I had never heard of the whole time I had been there. I had never seen, really, or heard of jet fighters during my term except one time when I was in Combat Base Training at Muroc, California. Lancaster Air Base was there, which had experimental planes and we saw planes flying for beyond anything we could dream of, way up there and we didn't know what they were. It turns out, they were jet planes. So, that aspect of the technological developments of the war, the better bombs, the better fighter planes, like, we went from the P-38 to the P-51. P-38 was an excellent plane, but the P-51 could just outstrip the p-38 as far as speed. It was just unbelievable. We saw those improvements in conventional weapons during the war. I saw nothing of the real technological developments and had no inkling. I was just like any other person inside the States, had no inkling of the atomic program.

- D: One more final question. Are there any aspects of the war that you could remember that you wouldn't normally find in a history textbood?
- F: (Laughter) No, no. I think some of the things I see in the textbooks I read today, I think some way they are making, they're disparaging what went on at times. I certainly think that's true with later wars, the Korean and Vietnam War. I don't believe the men who fought in them were any different than the guys who fought in this one. Certainly there was the-- not the popular background of the subsequent wars. But I thought it was an absolute crime the way people protested about it, refused to fight in it.

The obligation from the time I was a kid was: when the country goes to war, you go to war; when it goes to peace, you go to peace. A lot haven't accepted that. I was always brought up to respect my elders and what have you. Unfortunately, the things we did subsequent World War II have broke that down.

I think our biggest mistake after World War II was our military and our civil government permitted the riots in Berlin by our troops and in Tokyo, wanting to go home, because I can assure you that 90% of those who did that--as a matter of fact, I would say 100%--none

were combat veterans. They were guys that maybe were going to get called up. I don't believe the man who had been in the service, whether he was a doughboy or what, would have ever participated in any of those things. As a matter of fact, the men in units that did it would have put it down and stomped them guys. That's my personal conclusion, but I can tell you at least for many years a good share of the guys that I associated with also went through the same experiences I had and had the same background from the same era in which we grew up. Okay?

D: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW.