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Narrator

Interviewers

Time of interview: 2003 (date unknown)

Place of interview: Saratoga Springs, NY
(Supplemental to Interview of 2001)

LC: (pointing at map) this is where I was. It was my last duty station, November 1, 1944.

I: What do you mean by last duty station?

LC: Well I was assigned to the 9th Armored Division and I had my orders to come home. But then they said I had to go and teach the 9th Armored how to do interdiction. So I was there and on December 16th the Battle of the bulge came through.

(pointing at map) This is where one of our pilots was shot down. I met his daughter. She was two years old at that time. She's been invited over there 2 or 3 times. They were putting a plaque up in town. They did that over there. We used to have meetings of the fighter pilots of the 366th and she came to one. She wanted me to go over there with her. I couldn't spend the time away from my family.

I: Did she go over there?

LC: Yes. She is in Kansas City. I told her I had no interest in going back over there. But we have stayed in contact ever since.

This is my oldest son, adopted from Canada (pointing at photo). When I retired in 1968 he was in the Marines and sent to Vietnam. Here is my youngest son (pointing at photo). He is in Hawaii now and has been in the Marines for fifteen years.

This book (3-ring binder) has the whole story, all of my missions.

I: How many missions did you fly?

LC: I flew 199 missions, 247 hours of combat. Here are all of the dates and the flight orders.

I: (looking at photo of L.C.'s plane) How did you like this plane (the P-47)?

LC: It (P-47) was the toughest old beast. I saw them come back with cylinders out. The P-51 was liquid-cooled. A 50 caliber round in the cooling system was trouble.

I: Tell me about D-Day. What was your roll there?

LC: I flew three missions on D-day.

I: On June 6th itself?

LC: Yes, in daylight. We flew to Carentan, France to take out a communications center. We first flew circles around Carentan for two hours to draw enemy fire away from the troops of the 101st airborne who were trying to get together on the ground. After that we dive bombed the communications center which served the entire Cherbourg peninsula. That was one of our missions. We had two there missions on D-Day.

I: What were the other two?

LC: They were interdiction missions. They were like fighter sweeps, looking for anything that was German.

I: You must have been tired after that day.

LC: I fell asleep one day after bombing bridges on the Seine. We were coming back from France to England. We were at about 20,000 feet. My wingman saw me start to turn away and yelled "wake up!". We had been up since three o'clock in the morning. We'd go out at daylight and not be done until dark.

I: How low did you go on some of those interdiction missions?

LC: We used the term "angels" for altitude. I flew right down at the tree tops. When you have people shooting at you, if you are higher they can shoot at you longer. Flying low was how we survived.

I: I would like to hear more about your missions.

LC: After a while the missions, except for particular missions, kind of fall into a pattern. From one day to the next it was the same.

I: What was the pattern?

LC: If you were told to go work with the tanks, one of the pilots was down in one of the tanks. We would fly out ahead of the tanks looking for wherever there was German activity. If they were seen moving artillery we would strafe them. If we found a German airfield we would strafe them or blow up the hangers. We could carry a thousand pound bomb under each wing of the P-47. We carried mostly 250 pound bombs when going against tanks because a 250 pound bomb would disable a tank.

I: The Tiger tanks were pretty big, weren't they?

LC: The biggest one they had. The gun that we had couldn't penetrate their armor.

I: You mean the 50 caliber?

LC: No, no, I mean the 75mm on the Sherman tank. Their 88mm gun could shoot right through a Sherman tank.

I: I've heard stories of the 88mm shells passing right through a Sherman tank.

LC: Yes. But the worst was, if it hit at a certain angle and slowed down a little bit it wouldn't exit the other side. It would stay inside and ricochet around and just tear the hell out of everything and everybody.

I: So did you have any close calls yourself? Did you ever get shot down?

LC: No. I came back with a lot of bullet holes but never got shot down.

I: Was "Larry's Chariot" your only plane?

LC: Yes, I flew all of my missions in it.

I: Was that uncommon?

LC: Yup. I guess I had a pretty good guardian angel. If you leaf through this book you will get more stories than I can tell you. Here is a picture of Anderson flying through the blast after dropping bombs on an ammunition dump. The picture was taken from the plane behind him. Every plane had cameras mounted in the wings.

I: You were with him?

LC: Yes, I was on that mission. I've got a book of all the planes that were in the 91st. You can't decipher which plane went down on which mission.

I: So, you were married at the time?

LC: Yes. I was married in November and went over in December of 1943.

I: How was that on your wife? Did she know what you were doing?

LC: Oh yes. She didn't know I was a fighter pilot because I had just graduated out of flying school. She knew I was going for fighters.

I: She passed away?

LC: Yes. We were married 56 years.

I: That's great. So, did you raise your family in this house?

LC: For 35 years I was in this house.

I: When were your kids born, what years?

LC: Our first was born in 1948. He was a Canadian orphan. Our daughter Susan was born in 1951. She's down in Carolina now. Gary was born in 1955. They were all born in sequence. Our youngest is in the Marines.

I: The "jug" was a nickname for the P-47?

LC: Yes. The British named it that. They said it looked like their milk box.

I: Here is photo is of Victorville in 1942.

LC: That is where I went after basic. I was 20 years old. It was Victorville, CA. I was an aviation mechanic then, working on the twin-engine PT-9 Curtiss trainers.

I: did you ever scrape it up with any German pilots?

LC: No. I never shot at a German airplane. We had such superiority in the sky that they would hold off, knowing that we only had 5 hours of fuel and our bombers had over 6. Our interdiction work with the tanks was what we specialized in. We took over German airfields as the tanks advanced across France and Belgium.

I: So you never went back over there?

LC: No. Our organization went back over on the 50th (D-Day) anniversary.

I was on recall during the Korean War, but I was in Japan. I was commander of a radar station in northern Hokkaido. We had to replace what was called a "bedspring" radar with one under a dome. I also worked in a Combat Center. The fighter pilots over there were giving the radar station all kinds of grief, telling us that we didn't know where they were and this & that. Then I went up there and me being a WW-II fighter pilot they started listening to me.

This (pointing to document in binder) is a story about the Engineers on D-Day.

I: A-1 is what they were called?

LC: It was E-1. They came ashore with all of their equipment but couldn't get it over the cliffs to build an airstrip so they built a small one right along the beach.

This next photo is me flying solo in the CT-17. I was checked out on about a dozen different aircraft, right up through B-17 and B-29. I was an instructor pilot on the DC-3 "goony birds". I flew in B-25's and B-26's. We had a B-26 that was shot up. It was on strip A-1. The guys patched

it up, took all of the guns out of it, and built a wooden platform that lifted up into the bomb bay. We used it to fly across to England and bring back parts for our fighters.

LC: (indicating photo in binder) This is Colonel Pease (sp?). He and I got the DFC together. We were the only two flying on the beach head that day.

I: Why were you the only two flying that day?

LC: The weather was so bad.

I: So why did you fly when nobody else did?

LC: Because they asked us to. They asked us to take out this observation post. We were able to go off the beach head down over the channel and up this river that came out. They (Germans) were in on the left hand side.

I: You never saw Eisenhower did you?

LC: No.

I: So where were you when the war ended?

LC: I was in Arizona teaching Chinese pilots how to fly on instruments.

I: What did you do when you got out of the service?

LC: I went into the upholstering business. I used the GI Bill to go into training with a guy in Troy, NY. He later lost his shirt up here on the horses and I bought the company from him. When I got called up for Korea a guy who owned an upholstering business in Troy offered to buy me out.

I: I see the Enola Gay here in your book.

LC: I was involved during the testing of the bombs.

I: What do you mean?

LC: I was an instructor pilot for the "Goony birds" in Syracuse, NY when they sent me and another pilot to TDY (temporary duty) in Albuquerque, NM. Each day we flew up into Nevada to Indian Springs. After the test detonations we would fly the nose cones from the bombs out to the Navy in California for evaluation. We were there for five or six weeks before returning to Syracuse.