

Description Sheet

Interview: Patrick Scarano
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Name: Patrick Scarano
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Biographical Information: Patrick Scarano was born and raised in Cortland, NY. He attended public schools and 4 years at Cornell. He attended Officers Candidate School and began flying for Eastern Airlines. He then flew multi-engine cargo planes over the Himalaya Mountains in China and Burma. He held the rank of Captain in the CBI and Lt. Col in the reserves.

Lt. Colonel Patrick Scarano
Narrator

Lt. Colonel Robert Vanahorsheld
Interviewer

Wayne Clark
Videographer and Interviewer

January 23, 2001
Syracuse Armory

RV: Colonel, when were you born and where did you grow up?

PS: In New York State. [Laughter] Cortland, NY, same address I have here.

RV: And where did you go to school?

PS: I went to school in the Cortland School System. Later on I went to Cornell for a few years, and then from there into the service.

RV: What were you studying at Cornell?

PS: The course I took at Cornell was Dynamics and Heating Engineer; that was the main course.

RV: How did you come to be in the service?

PS: Well, that's a story. How did I get into the service and why did I pick this avenue to get there?

Back in 1943, the war in Europe was getting worse and I was a pilot through the CPT [Civilian Pilot Training] program. I won a scholarship after high school. From that I started flying - primary and then if I passed that, I'd do secondary and if I passed that then cross country and then from there the instructor rating. I stayed there at Peters for a while and then the Navy man came through and was looking for recruits for the Navy. He said, "Go to New York and take a physical at 50 Broadway." I took the physical and they said I was a quarter of an inch short. I said, "Oh my God, they wanted a 5'7". Anyway, I went back to Peters. I was an instructor there because he kept me there.

But then I heard that Eastern Airlines was hiring pilots so I took a day off, went to LaGuardia Field to Eastern Airlines Headquarters and they said they were hiring pilots for the military cargo division of the airline. Now, just about that time the government said they needed a lot of cargo pilots, so they hired me as a pilot with Eastern Airlines and sent me to school in Atlanta, GA. I went through their school, both the engine, aircraft instrument rating and all that.

Now, they were going to get C-46 Commando Airplanes from Curtis – from the government – and the airlines were waiting for the production. When they got that, they would put me on the Cargo Division of Eastern Airlines, flying C-46 Cargo Airplanes with cargo from the U.S. to Europe. In the meantime, while we were waiting for the airplanes to come in there, they (Eastern Airlines) put me on a domestic run until the planes came.

I was on a domestic run for about four months, flying the regular routes from New York to Miami, Houston, and so forth. One day, Eddie Rickenbacker, the owner and president of Eastern Airlines, called us pilots into the operation room. There were about twenty of us pilots. He said, “Fellas, I have good news and I have bad news. First, I’ll give you the bad news. The bad news is that we’re not going to get C46 airplanes anymore because all the production that comes through- the U.S. Army has taken. We have a surplus of pilots and I am going to have to let you go. That’s the bad news.”

In fact, he said, “That’s the end of our Cargo Division of the Airline. Now- the good news is that as long as we trained you on multi-engine aircraft, instrument rating, meteorology and all that stuff there, the US Army will guarantee that if you go to a ninety day officer’s candidate school in Memphis, you will come out there with a commission as a 2nd Lieutenant and you will be in the service.”

So, I went to Memphis, TN and was one of what they called “the ninety day wonders.” After ninety days, I graduated, got commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant, and there I’m in the service. From there, they sent me on my first mission which was the Air Transport Command (ATC). So, that’s how I got into it.

RV: Where were you in the ATC? Where did they assign you?

PS: Memphis, TN. This was the fairing Division of the ATC and this part here is really funny. They said, “Well now Lieutenant, we’re going to send you to Little Rock, AR to go through the instrument flight school.” I said, “Why do that?” I’ve just come out of Eastern Airlines, I’ve got a rating, instrument rating, FAA, and multi-engine rating. This officer said, “Well that’s okay but you’ve got to do things the Army way!”

So, they sent me to Adams Field in Little Rock, AR. I went through instrument school and, of course, it was a breeze. They said, "Hey we've got something really good here. We want to keep you here as an instructor on instrument flight." So I said, "What the hell, anything like that." After I instructed a few classes, they made me the chief check pilot. Now, any of the students that went through the school would take a ride with me. It was up to me to either pass them or, if they were a little bit weak, to send them back for additional training.

RV: So, you were a check pilot?

PS: I was a check pilot and had been asking to be sent overseas because of the war effort. Finally, my orders came through. They sent me to Miami, FL for overseas duty. The first thing they did was to give me an overseas physical. They got about twenty officers in this one room in the medical division. They said, "Strip." So, we stripped. The doctor came in and said, "Okay fellas, anything wrong with you fellas, step forward. If not, put your clothes back on and go down to the airport for 1500 takeoff. So, can you imagine that? That's an overseas physical. I thought they were going to give me an extensive electrocardiogram, blood tests and all that but if the body is warm, you're in!

I was in Miami but, the orders said, "We want you to pack winter underwear. Get your winter clothing, winter underwear and that's part of your winter gear to go overseas." So they sent me overseas. I am thinking, "Oh my God, with heavy underwear, that means I'm going to go to either Greenland or a cold country." Two days later, I ended up in the Assam Valley of India. Hot! It was hot, during the monsoon season. Ha, winter underwear!

I think the reason they said to pack your winter underwear is if there were any spies telling the direction of our movement, they would say, "The troop movement is going this way, sending them north or to a cold country." They really created a diversion and sent them off the beaten path.

So now, I'm in Chabua, India [27.48°N 95.18°E]. When I was with Eastern Airlines, they did have a couple of Curtiss C-46 Transports. We had a little time in it, but not too much, just a few hours to get acquainted with the airplane and checkout as a pilot. So when they got their C-46 airplanes, all they had to do was assign us to the aircraft, load up and go to the air with the load.

[Shows map] I was in Mohanbari, India [27°28'25.03"N 095°01'21.83"E]. At that time in 1943-1944, there was a blockade on the east coast with Nazi submarines and the shipping was bad there. Also, China had a blockade of submarines. So the vital supplies for China came by ship up to about Calcutta, India and then

from there to the Assam Valley. They had vital supplies and they also had 100 octane gasoline. This is for the B-29 bases that flew out of bases in China.

My mission was to fly the C-46 transports from the Assam Valley. We would start at the Assam Valley at the beginning of the Ledo Road. Now, they would have vital supplies going down the Ledo Road, but they were also fighting the Japs and didn't have much time or material that went through. So they had to institute something better and that's when they called "The Life-Line of China."

We would start at the Assam Valley with a C-46 and about fifty or sixty 55 gallon drums of 100 octane gasoline. We would take off, usually a night flight, from the Assam Valley. The operation was to circle up to 15,000 feet so you could clear the Himalayas. The top of the mountains there were about 15,000 feet. So we would spread out and then head east for Kunming, China [25°04'2N 102°41'2E].

It would take approximately 2 hours, this was about a 400 mile trip, at 15,000 feet, mostly in the clouds. We'd get pretty close to Kunming, China and turn on the beacon. We would home in on the beacon, spiral down and land in Kunming, China. The trucks would be waiting there. They would pull up and unload the airplane. In the meantime, we'd go and have something to eat. They would refuel the airplane and get it ready for our trip back home.

Going over, it was hazardous due to bad weather, but going back it was even worse. We had the jet stream that flew from west to east and sometimes it would be pretty strong, 50 to 60 mph and, in some cases, up to 100 mph. Going back home, you are traveling westbound, into the face of the jet stream. So, it would take you longer. We'd head back to the Assam Valley, pick up a beacon, circle down to sea level as we broke out of the overcast, and land at the airport where we took off from.

But, here's the hazard: you'd get there early morning and there would be fog. So, you'd have to circle until the fog would lift or go to an alternate airport. If the fog did not lift and the alternate airport is too far away, you would run out of gas, then you would have to jump out of the airplane and lose the airplane. A lot of ships were lost that way.

A lot of airplanes were also lost in another respect. On the C-46 airplane, which was a very good plane, we would carry 55 gallon drums of gasoline. At sea level, the procedure was for one of the crew members to go in and see if there were any leaks. If we had bad spot or a leaker, we would take it out. If not, a crew member would come out and say, "Captain, everything is okay." So then we'd take off, get up to 15,000 feet where there is lower atmospheric pressure. So, with any flaw in that drum, it would leak gasoline. Now, gasoline fumes flow

downward, so on the C-46 as you know, the gasoline fumes would flow downward into the belly [of the aircraft]. At sea level, it's warm but when you get up to about 15,000 feet, it's cold. On the instrument panel of the C-46, there is a red button that you press for heat [in the cabin]. [However,] if you have a lot of fumes that have flowed down into the belly and you got cold and pressed the red button, it could cause a spark. The spark would ignite the fumes in the belly and that was the end of that airplane!

WC: This is a continuation of the interview with Mr. Scarano. The interviewer is Wayne Clark. Go ahead, Sir.

PS: Well, I just got through mentioning the hazard of flying the C-46 over the Hump, the dangerous weather, the updrafts and the jet stream over the Himalayan Mountains. The War Department considered the Himalayan Mountains and the Life-Line to China a combat zone. As a combat zone, they had a criteria of 750 hours of total time in that area and you have rotation to go home.

They also mentioned that being in a combat zone, you were also awarded certain medals for the amount of time that you had flown over the mountains. So, the first medal I received and earned was this Air Medal, this medal right here. [Shows medal] This medal was given for 150 hours of pilot time over the Himalayan Mountains.

The next one was given when you accumulated over 300 hours and you would be awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, which was a very good medal. When you kept accumulating hours, you'd have another medal. In other words, after 300 hours, I would earn a Cluster to the Air Medal. After another 300 hours accumulated over the Hump, there would be another Distinguished Flying Cross. Instead of giving you the medal itself, they would give you a Cluster for the medal they had already given you. So, what I have is the Air Medal with the Cluster and the Distinguished Flying Cross with the Cluster.

Then, as long as I have this out and I'm talking about medals [refers to Medal Showcase], I have the WWII Victory Medal and the New York State Conspicuous Service Cross. If you got any of the other medals like the Air Medal and Distinguished Flying Cross and you had a good service with the Air Service, New York State would award you the Conspicuous Service Cross. That's about it as far as medals are concerned. What you see here are my overseas medals. When you have these on your blouse, they call it fruitcake. But it's the Distinguished Flying Cross with Cluster, the Air Medal with Cluster and the Asiatic theater. I also got a medal for the War in the Asiatic theater, which is the China, Berber, India area.

These other medals are when I started out as a 2nd Lieutenant, and then promotion to 1st Lieutenant. What they call double tracks are the Captain's bars and from there I got promoted to a Major when I returned to the Service. As I stayed in the Reserves and accumulated time, I was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel.

These other wings here are what the pilots wear. There is a regular wing and then when you have accumulated about 1,000 hours in the Air Corps, you would have what they call the Command Pilot's Wings. I also have my Dog Tags, which are familiar to anyone.

This is a citation from the government for Victorious Service. This one here was my card, naming me as an Instrument Pilot and this was the pass that I carried. The one with "Scarano" and an emblem on it was given to me when I got out of the service and back home was made the Liaison Officer of the Air Force Academy. That's enough for these medals here.

WC: I have one other question for you, Sir. You mentioned you received the Order of the Purple Cloud?

PS: No. That's for China and I'm coming to that right now. The War in China back in early 1945 was getting much worse. The government had to get troops from the northern part of China and bring them to the southern part of China to fight. They thought I would do much better being transferred to China on a C-47 airplane, which is basically the DC-3 Douglas.

When I flew with Eastern Airlines, I accumulated a lot of hours and experience on the DC-3. So they thought it would be a good idea to send me to China to do some service with the C-46 airplane. So, my first mission was to go to North China to pick up troops and bring them back to Shantou, or the southern part of China to fight the Japanese.

As I said before, the war was getting much worse. I took many trips up there and, at one time, we had to transfer a Chinese Cavalry from the northern part of China to the southern part of China. That was pretty tricky. They didn't have much time so they thought they would use the airplane.

They took my favorite C-47 and made some stalls. In those stalls, they would put four horses. They would have a veterinarian go along on the trip. They would put the horses on the airplane, tranquilize them enough to be calm for a couple hours until we reached our destination and then unload them and everything would be okay. Everything thing was going along fine and we did several trips with the horses. But then one night, we went for a cavalry outfit in North China,

took the usual four horses, put them in the airplane, tranquilized them for the two hours, and when I got south to my destination after two hours the weather was very bad and I could not land there. I had to either go to an alternate airport or wait out the storm. We went to an alternate airport which took another hour-and-a-half. In the meantime, the tranquilizer wore off for the horses and they didn't give them any more so they just stayed like that. So, the horses got up and became unruly. There was really nothing we could do; we couldn't land because the weather was too bad. One of the horses knocked its hoof through the side of my airplane, a hole about as big as a watermelon.

WC: Did that affect the pressure of the aircraft?

PS: No, you see it was a lucky thing that we had a C-47. The C-47, at the time, was not pressurized so putting a hole through the cabin was just like opening a window and didn't have anything to do with the pressurization.

We delivered troops and several cavalry outfits from north to south. There came another time when we had to deliver medical supplies to the Communist Chinese [shows picture]. This is China and this is The Great Wall. The medical supplies that we had to deliver were to Yunnan, which was the capital of the Communist Chinese Government, about 70 miles north of The Great Wall. Occasionally, we delivered medical supplies to the Communist Chinese Government but it was not on a regular basis. You had to get permission/authorization from the allies to fly the medical supplies to the Communist Chinese Government, which was another entity by itself. We did, after a while, deliver two or three loads there. The Government in Yunnan did not have adequate airports. They had a small strip in a valley. It's a good thing we had the DC-3 because it could land and stop in a small space. That was it as far as delivering medical supplies north.

About this time, we had a surprise visit at our base in Chen Yi. Our base in Chen Yi had an airport that was about 90 miles north of Kunming and the elevation of the field was about 7,000 feet. We lived at 7,000 feet and when we flew the airplane we would go from 7,000 feet to 15,000 feet. One day, we got a surprise visit from Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, the head of the Chinese Government at that time. We were about forty pilots in the barracks so we stayed at attention and then passed in review in front of the Generalissimo. The Generalissimo said, "Men, I want to thank you for doing such a great job in maintaining the Lifeline of China. For that, I am going to award you pilots the Order of the Purple Cloud." That was a beautiful medal. I saw it but I never got it because, shortly thereafter, the war was getting worse in China and the Japanese forces were coming down from the north into the central part of China and into the capital. The Generalissimo, Chiang Kai-shek had to abandon his seat of government and go to Taiwan. You probably heard that he was in Taiwan. At that time, the raid came

so quick and not knowing about it, they had to leave in a hurry. The Generalissimo left behind most of his important papers right there in his office. As it turned out, the order for my medal, the Order of the Purple Cloud, was in his office, with other orders. I never got the medal. Maybe someday, some Chinese Ambassador might [bestow] me the medal. I hope I do get it.

WC: It's possible.

PS: At this time, I had accumulated my 750 hours of flying the Hump and China and it's time to be rotated home.

WC: Okay, let's just back up a little bit here. As a pilot over there, did you ever encounter Japanese aircraft, fighters, transports or bombers?

PS: I'm glad you brought that up because I might have missed it. The Japanese were pretty smart people. They were smart pilots. [But] we had some basic radar and we were flying mostly in bad weather anyway. [Remember, our usual pattern] when coming back to Chen Yi, where I was based, [was to] circle until we got the beacon, which was about five miles north of the airport. After we hit the beacon and knew we were at a certain altitude, we'd fly due south for about three minutes, descending until we broke out of the overcast and land on the runway at Chen Yi.

The Japanese, as I said, were pretty smart. They would see us someplace up the line and would follow right in back of our airplane so that when the beacon would pick up our aircraft, it would only see on the radar one blip. The Japanese fighter or bomber would be so close to our tail that the radar would only pick up the one blip. They would follow us down and when we broke out of the overcast over the airport to land, the Japanese bomber would come right over us and bomb the field, without us ever even knowing they were coming in. That's what they did. That is the only encounter I ever had with the Japanese aircraft; them following me in and bombing the field over my head after I had landed.

WC: Did you ever encounter any ground fire from Japanese troops or any type of artillery bursts?

PS: The only ground fire that I encountered wasn't actually ground fire; they would come over and bomb the field. If we happened to be in the barracks, the standard order was to grab our gear and canteens and head for the trenches that were around the base. We would spend the night in the trenches until the bombing was over with and the next morning, we would get out of the trenches and go back to our barracks. That's the only encounter I had with ground fire or face to face with Japanese.

WC: Did you ever hear the term “Aluminum Highlight?”

PS: No.

WC: I think it had something to do with the amount of aircraft that were lost along the Hump area.

PS: No.

WC: Did you have any pilots that flew that were a part of the American Volunteer Group that came over around 1940 that flew with the Nationalist Chinese at all?

PS: No, very rarely we would see someone that came from the reserves before the war. There were a few but I didn't exactly who they were and they flew with the Flying Tigers. The Flying Tigers were very active in that area and they started in the states with P-40s and they gradually rotated to duty in China. We had quite a few of the Flying Tigers flying out of bases in China.

WC: You had a lot of experience when you went into the Service flying with Eastern Airlines. Did you find that your fellow pilots had as much experience as you or were they lacking?

PS: Well, we didn't talk too much about their experience. There was one pilot that was at Eastern before I was there. Most of the pilots I flew with were regular cadets that went to flying school that came there. Very few of the pilots were from another airline. There were a few but basically most of the young fellas were trained as cadets and got to fly there. The reason I got to be a 1st Pilot as soon as I got there was because of my experience with the airline. I didn't have to ride as a copilot for three or four months to get used to the airplane and then go on to be the pilot of that airplane. I already had that experience so when I went there, I was immediately put into left seat as the Captain of that airplane.

WC: Your crew: there was normally a pilot and a copilot. Did you have a load master or crew chief?

PS: With the C-46 or C-47, we had a crew of three: the pilot (myself), copilot and radio man. The radio man was also the navigator. He would navigate, but have the communications with headquarters and transmit all these messages via radio and they could tell him, sometimes, about where we were. So, the standard crew was the three men. As I said before, I only flew the C-47 and C-46 and those were the crew members. Later on, when I got home and flew a hospital ship,

which was a different story. That had the pilot (myself, the Captain), copilot, flight nurse and medical attendant. That was a four man crew.

WC: Did you carry any kind of armament on your aircraft?

PS: No, there was no armament at all, not a bit. All we had was our trusty .45 caliber pistols that we carried all the time. Nothing for any guns or bombs, we had just plain airplanes.

WC: Did you have to carry any kind of survival gear or parachutes or anything?

PS: Oh yes, that's definite. We always had onboard, on every flight, our parachute. The equipment in the back of the parachute was some sort of survival gear. It had the machete, a couple of flares, three or four packages of soya biscuits to eat and possibly, if we were over water, there would be some kind of lures to catch fish. That's about it other than mosquito repellent and the parachute itself.

WC: Did you ever have to bail out?

PS: Not exactly, but there were a couple cases where we had run into ice. I was in a C-47 in the China area and had accumulated approximately 2 to 3 inches of ice on the wings. I told the crew, "You better get your parachutes on. I'm going down as low as I can and if we don't break out and we run out of gas (the red lights are on now), we're going to have to bail out." At that particular time, my radio man called in and said, "Hey, I've got great news! We're pretty close to Shan Tu and this is the first time that the government has put in an instrument landing system. Here is the number and if you will fly a course of 270 degrees for about ten minutes, you will run into the beacon at the end of the runway and they will turn on the instrument landing system for you." We did that, got to the beacon, called in, they gave us the signals, turned on the instrument landing system and we landed. This was probably the first time an Army plane landed in China with the instrument landing system. This was in Chin Tu, which was one of the main B-29 bases to bomb Japan.

WC: What were the Chinese people like? Did you have much interaction with them?

PS: Oh yes. They were good people. The reason I say they were good people is because I did duty in India. When I was in India and we had time off, we would go into a small town. We would watch the people just mope around; that was their way of life. Then, when I did duty in China I'd land and go into a town like Kunming, I'd see the Chinese people and they were walking fast and seemed like they were busy. They were hard working, studious people.

They would respect us and when they saw us they would say, “NĒhĪo,” which means “everything is okay.” [Laugh] Every time you go to a foreign country, there are always bad words that you pick up. There are also bad words in China. If they didn’t like you and really wanted to give you hell, they would take their two fingers, point them to your eyes and say, “[unclear].” That meant “you eat dead mice.” [Laugh] On the whole, I respect the Chinese people. They were good workers.

WC: Did you spend any time in Burma at all?

PS: Not in town. Several times, we had to land in Myitkyina, Burma [25°23'21.093"N 097°21'206.913"E] and take on gas. That’s the airport in Burma. I hate to say this. There was a Colonel, who was trying to make General. He did make it, of course. His name was Colonel Tunner.¹ Instead of having our tanks full of gasoline, which would be about eight hours of flight, he would tell them to give us three hours of gasoline in the airplane. The other gasoline that was left over that did not go into the tank, he would put into the oil drums. At the end of the month he would write down “tonnage over the Hump.” If he put 5 or 6 extra drums of gasoline in my airplane from Assam to China, he could write that off as “tonnage over the Hump.” We would have three hours of gas in the tank, fly from India to Myitkyina, take the drums off and put more in for tonnage. Then he would put another 2 hours of flight worth of gasoline in my tanks. So, in other words, there would be about 800 gallons of gasoline in the airplane and they would only fill me with 200 gallons.

One time, I said to the gasoline man, “Fill up the tank.” He said, “We can’t fill up the tanks, we can only give you about one quarter of your usual capacity.” I got mad. The weather was bad and I said, “I will not fly this airplane unless you fill up the tanks.” He said, “I can’t do that.” I said, “Go talk to your operations manager and tell them that I’m going to leave my airplane here, stick with my airplane and I’m not going to take off until you fill my tanks.” He came back after half-an-hour and said, “We’ll fill up your tanks.” So, they filled up my tanks, I took off, finished my routine flight to China and there it was. Two months later, I saw in the Service paper that Colonel Tunner was promoted to Brigadier General for the excellent job that he had done flying supplies over the Hump. So there you are.

WC: You were rotated back to the States before the war ended?

¹ Slayton, R. A.. (2010) *Master of the Air: William Tunner and the Success of Military Airlift*.

Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press.

PS: Yes. I accumulated over 750 hours over the Hump and China flying and the routine was that you would be rotated home at 750 hours. This was in China. I came home from a flight one day and Colonel Keagan, who was our Commanding Officer, called me into his office. He said, "Lieutenant Scarano, I want to thank you for the good job that you've been doing here but it's time to send you home. On my desk, I have two orders. I have one order, promoting you to Captain. The other order is rotating you home. They are both on my desk. Now, if I send them both in, they are not going to act on both of them. What they'll probably do is send you home as your present rank, 1st Lieutenant. I would suggest, if I put in for your promotion first and then you wait two or three weeks, then I'll send in your orders for rotating you home. That way, you'll go home as a Captain."

I said, "Oh, that's very good." He said, "It's up to you."

I said, "Well, I'm anxious to go home. If I go home as a 1st Lieutenant, there won't be much for me to do. But, if I go home as a Captain I'll be able to swing a good position as a pilot on a bigger airplane. So, I'll take my chance. Send in the orders for my promotion first and then wait to send in my orders to go home."

That's exactly what happened. He sent in for my promotion, that came in and then, two weeks later, he sent in for my rotation home, and that came in. So, I went home as a Captain. The bad thing about that, at that particular time, my orders said to leave Chan Ye, China and fly by military aircraft to Karachi, India. From there, I would get a shuttle and go to Casablanca. [However,] when I got to Karachi, the minute I got into the airport and showed my orders, we heard about VE day! The people in Europe capitulated. The problem was that they froze all orders to go home right then and there. They said for me to wait until further orders and I didn't know what. There was a rumor that we were going to concentrate more on ending the war with Japan and that, instead of going home, they were going to divert us to another part of China.

I was downfallen. I was anxious to go home. While I was sitting there, a friend of mine that I knew back in the States at OCS [Officer Candidate School] came by and said, "Pat! What are you doing here?" I told him that I was being rotated home but my orders were frozen. What could I do? He said, "I'm flying is a supply ship from Casablanca to Karachi. I'm going to unload that, get something to eat, refuel and I'll be taking off again in about two hours back for Casablanca. But I cannot take any passengers. I have a C-46 airplane that's parked in the north ramp, number 766, but I cannot take passengers." I said, "Oh, thank you, Jim. Good luck to you."

So, after he left, I took my b4 bag and snuck over to the north ramp, got into the airplane, got in the tail where the toilet was and closed the door. An hour later, I

heard the engines start up and then take off. About ten minutes later, I got out of the can in the back, went to the cockpit and said, "Hey Jim!" He said, "Pat, I knew you'd take my hints."

We landed the next day in Casablanca, the end of his trip and the end of my trip. I went up to the Operations Manager and asked, "When is your next flight home?" He said, "How did you get here?" I said, "I came by military aircraft." He said, "Let me see your orders." The orders said to go home but that I was frozen in Karachi. He said, "You know what you're going to do? You're going to take the next airplane going back to Karachi. You stay right here. You did something wrong and you can't go home." I sat there, downhearted, of course.

An hour later, the same officer came over to me and said, "I hate to tell you this, but I've got some important papers to go to the States and they are to go by courier service. I can't send them with just anyone; I have to send them with an officer. You, as a Captain, are eligible to take it. Would you like to take the courier to the States?" I said, "Do I ever!" Was I happy! They took this pouch and handcuffed the strap to my wrist with the important papers. I got on the airplane and we landed in Bangor, ME. That was the end of overseas.

WC: What was it like coming back to the States?

PS: Oh, I was so happy. I was the happiest man in the world. I came back to the States and went home on leave. I saw some of my family. I saw my daughter who was born while I was in India; my three month old little girl, Charlene. She was a beautiful thing. I was so happy to be home. I was home for thirty days and then had to go on my next mission. They sent me to Romulus to be a Captain on a hospital ship.

WC: Where was Romulus?

PS: Romulus Base in Michigan. Just before I was sent overseas, while I was in Little Rock, I took several flights as a copilot on a hospital ship so I was familiar with that. In Romulus, they gave me a copilot, nurse and medical attendant. There were four people in our crew and we had a C-47 airplane. We would take off from Romulus with a pocket full of money because we were going to be gone for a month. We would fly to either Metro Field on Long Island or Fort Dix in New Jersey. We'd take patients that came from the European Theater, usually about six litter cases and four or five ambulatory cases. We would fly them from the east coast, Metro Field or Fort Dix, west and drop off these patients to a hospital nearest to their home. It could be St. Louis or Cleveland, OH and we'd pull up, land at the airport, drop off the patients and work our way west from St. Louis to Kansas City to Denver. After dropping off our last patient, we would

proceed to Hamilton Field in California. After a few days of maintenance on the airplane, refueling and something else, we would get ready for our mission going east.

When we were in Hamilton Field, CA, we would take patients that were injured in the Pacific Theater and fly them east. We could drop off a couple patients in Ogden, UT and continue on to Wichita, KS, then Cleveland, etc. When we finished dropping off all our patients, we returned to Romulus, MI. After several days, we would do the same routine again.

While I was flying the hospital ship, one night in South Dakota, I was homing in on a beacon. Back in those days, they didn't control the airwaves. We had a radio beacon on this aircraft and it would home in on a broadcast station. They would have music, etc. This one night I was tuned in on a station in South Dakota and heard that the Japanese capitulated and it was VJ Day. So, there was the end of World War II, flying at 12,000 feet over South Dakota, heading west. Shortly after that, I came back to Romulus, went home on leave and was sent to Rome, NY for separation from the Service. That was not the end. I stayed in the Reserves.

WC: You retired when?

PS: I retired in about 1972. I stayed in the Reserves and was made a Liaison Officer for the Air Force Academy. I would go to a high school in uniform, talk to the Seniors, men and women, tell them that we would like to have them in the service and after they finished high school and graduated, they could pick going to the Air Force Academy, Annapolis or West Point. They had to get to their Congressional Representative and tell them they would like to be picked to go to one of the Academies. The Congressman would then have two or three students that he/she would send to these academies. I was a Liaison Officer and spent two weeks of active duty during the summer at the Air Force Academy. I would get to see the students I helped to get through there. I stayed in the Reserves for twenty years.

WC: Were you in the Reserves when the Army Air Force became the United States Air Force?

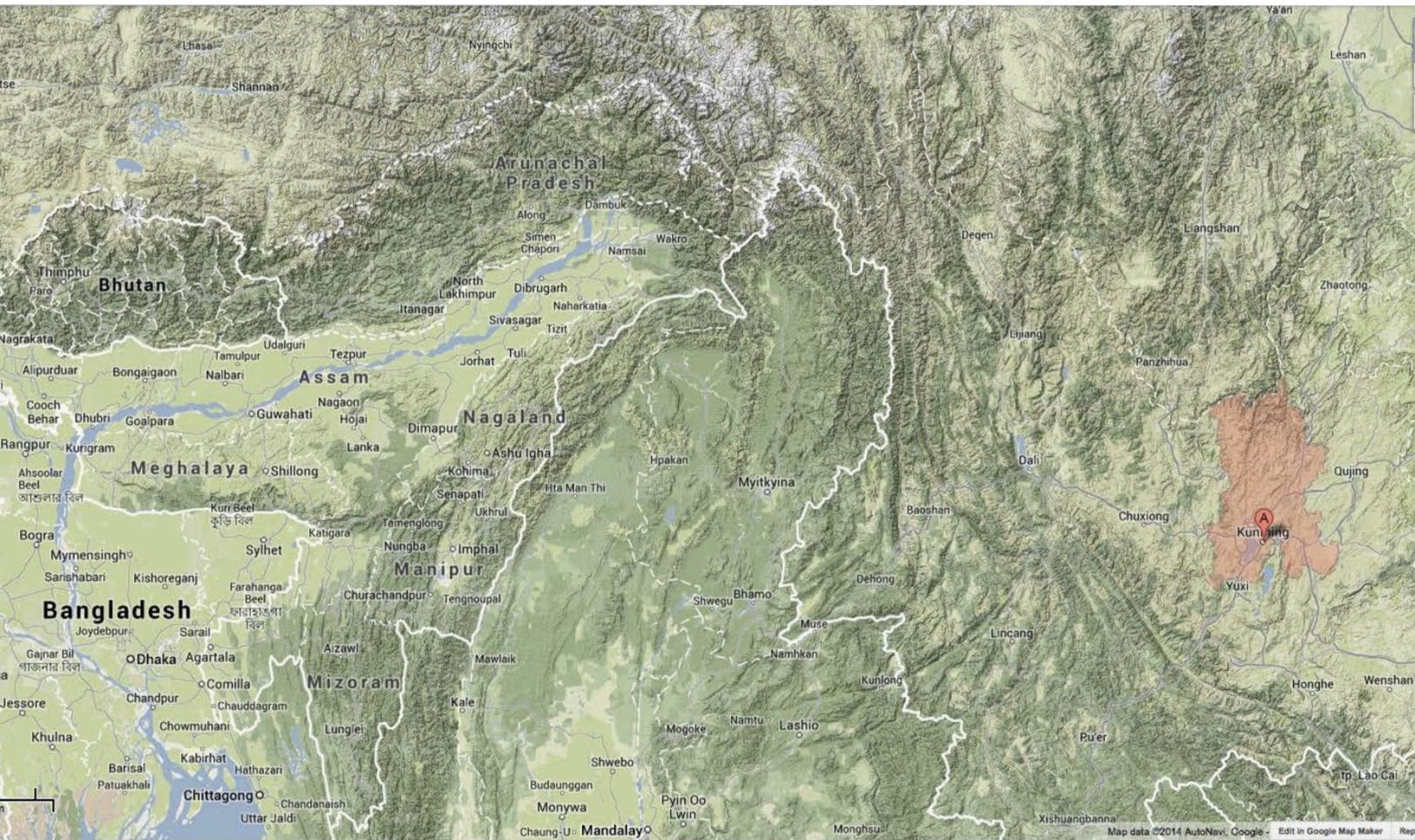
PS: Yes.

WC: What was that like?

PS: We would meet once a month at an Armory near our hometown, Cortland or Binghamton. We put in our fifty hours of studying or duty and that would be a satisfactory year toward my pension for retirement. It must have been about 1950

when the orders came through for making the Army Air Corps into the U.S. Air Force.

WC: I think that was 1947.



PS: Yes. They gave each one of the officers \$200 to go out and buy a blue uniform. I took my uniform and went to Rome Air Force Base, went to the commissary or PX and picked out a nice blue uniform, and hat. From then on, I was U.S. Air Force. That was a memorable occasion.

WC: Did you do any service in Korea when the Korean War broke out?

PS: No, no I didn't. I was waiting. It was a short war, I think only about a year. They never did call me but I had everything ready so if they said, "Let's go" I would have all of my household things in order and go just like that [snaps fingers]. So, I never went to Korea.

WC: I take it you enjoyed your experiences in the military.

PS: Oh definitely. Another duty that had that I enjoyed very much was being a Liaison Officer for the Civil Air Patrol. One time, they sent me to Harris Hill as the Commander for the Encampment for the Civil Air Patrol Cadets. They would send the Cadets to Harris Hill, give them ground training, put them in a glider and teach them to fly the glider alone so they could get their license as a glider pilot. I was the Commander of the Encampment in charge of fifty or sixty Civil Air Patrol Cadets, both male and female. That would be my two week tour duty at the Encampment. Later on, I would go to the Encampments and do whatever I could do to help the Civil Air Patrol. I got this Air Force Commendation Medal for the work that I did with the Civil Air Patrol [referring to medal showcase].

WC: Do you belong to any Veteran's Organizations, like the Hump Pilot's Association?

PS: Yes, I'm a member of the Hump Pilot's Association and also joined the VFW when I got home. In fact, about two months ago, I was given a pin and emblem of fifty years for being a member of the VFW for fifty years.

WC: That's great. Is there anything else you would like to add? Anything that comes to mind. Any humorous experiences or anything like that?

PS: Well, I've got a few that I don't want to put on tape because it might go to the wrong sources. But I do want to thank the Governor George Pataki and George Basher for giving me the opportunity to get my experiences documented for the people now and the people of the future.

The part that I'm kind of shaky about, and you can edit it if you think it's inappropriate, is when I was flying the Hump. One night, my roommate said, "Patrick, I've got cargo going to China and what do you think is on the manifest? A Grand Piano assigned to Madame Chiang Kai-shek." The Generalissimo's wife was a concert pianist and very good. For some reason, our government wanted to cement relations with China so they thought, what better way than to send this Grand Piano to Madame Chiang Kai-shek. So they put it in this cargo plane, instead of some gasoline and other supplies.

My friend flew the regular course and the more he flew toward China with his load, the madder he got and said, "What in the hell am I doing for the war effort when I should be flying the gasoline for the B-29s and I've got this darn piano assigned for Madame Chiang Kai-shek. After a while, he bent down and shut off the gasoline on one engine and the engine quit. The standard procedure when you

lose an engine is to jettison the cargo because you want to save the airplane and to hell with the cargo. So they went out back, opened the door and kicked out the Grand Piano over the Burma Jungles. [Laughter]

So when they got to Kung Ming, China, the truck pulls up to get the piano and the guy said, "Where's the piano?" The captain said, "You know, I lost an engine over Burma and there was something wrong with the cross feed and had to jettison the cargo. Then later on, I fooled around with the cross feed and checked the tanks and found there was a short on one of the valves. I opened another valve, the gasoline came in, started the engine and continue the trip here with both engines." So, that was humorous. But, maybe Madame Chiang Kai-shek got mad and told the Generalissimo, "Those pilots from Chen Ye who you told were going to get the Purple Cloud – forget them!" Maybe that's why I didn't get my Order of the Purple Cloud.

WC: Did you keep in touch with any of your flying buddies after the war?

PS: Not too many. Some nearby, I would, but they were from all over the country including California. I did have a couple of buddies from Michigan that I kept in touch with. There was one officer from California that called me in the middle of the night. He said, "Patrick Scarano?" I said, "Yes." He said, "You flew over the Hump, right?" I said, "Yes." He said, "I have your name here and about once a month I go down the list, pick out a name, call that person and see how they are doing just for the hell of it." I never went that far.

WC: Is there anything else you'd like to add about your experiences?

PS: No. It was a good experience and the Lord was with me. The main thing back then, and I don't know if you could do it now, is if you are the commander of that aircraft, it is up to you as a commander to make sure you have a safe return of the airplane and your crew. In fact, to go back to that C-47 flight at 15,000 feet, when I flew the Hump I would tell my crew, "Wear your sheepskin underwear and sheepskin flying suit because when you fly with me I do not turn the heater on. I fly blue and cold, but I return and so will you." It is up to the captain of that aircraft to look after the crew and the aircraft and return come hell or high water. There was a good many time when I was in China sleeping in an operation room at the airport and an officer would come up to me and say, "You're Lieutenant Scarano?" I'd reply, "Yeah." He'd say, "I'm going to take your airplane, we need it." I'd say, "You're taking my airplane? How are we going to get home? Where are your orders? Look, you see what I've got over here [pointing to his hip]? This is a 45 caliber pistol. You touch that airplane and you're going to get it! Get someone else's airplane!" He never touched my airplane.

Like I said, take care of your airplane and bring it back home. When you're in Burma and they want to get you short on gas you say, "No way, put the gasoline in there or I don't fly the airplane." As a captain of that aircraft, remember to do your duty.

WC: As a civilian, you went back to flying for the airlines?

PS: I went back to the airline and said, "I'd like to come back because you promised me that when we got back from the service that we could come back here. How long will it take until you can check me out as a Captain because I've been in China and probably have 2000 more hours in a C-47 and that's what their flying? I'm a much better pilot now than when I left here."

So they asked what my service number was and I told them, "527." I was a copilot with the airline then. They said, "Oh my God, you've got a very low number here. It might be two years before we can check you out as a captain."

I said, "Hey, I'm not going to fly as a copilot for two years waiting to be captain." As it turned out, about six months later, aviation expanded and I could have been a captain. But, I went home and got into the furnace and appliance business because there was a big demand for appliances and opened my store. I did that for a couple years and then I figured since I was still a young man and had a lot of flying left in me that I'd go back to flying. I made out a resume and sent it to some of the big manufacturers, stores and firms in the Syracuse area. One man, J Stanley Coyne, who ran the coin laundry system called me and said, "Patrick, I love your resume. Here is my airplane, you can come and fly with me to Maryland to see if you like it. You can fly three or four days a week and the two days that you don't fly, you can go out in the field and do some selling for me. You can sell garments to General Electric." I went back to flying. I flew for this man out of Hancock Field for about twelve years. After that, I came back home and did charter work. That was about it.

WC: Okay. In closing, anything else you'd like to add?

PS: What else can I say, except that I was born in New York State, I'm going to die in New York State, I think Pataki is a good man, it's an Empire State and I think I like it here.

WC: Okay, thank you, Sir.

Area of Operations

