

**John Carvell
Veteran**

**David Tyler
Baldwinsville Messenger and the Baldwinsville Public Library
Interviewer**

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DT: Good morning, I'm David Tyler the editor of The Messenger, and we're here today at the Baldwinsville Public Library with John Carvell, a WWII veteran. Mr. Carvell where did you live when you were growing up?

JC: I lived in Harrisville, NY. My parents run a hotel there, hotel business. I went to high school there and graduated there.

DT: Any brothers and sisters?

JC: Yes, I have three brothers, Kenneth, Leonard, and Walter, Jr.

DT: Did they take part in the service also?

JC: My oldest brother was a Navy man, and my youngest brother was in the Air Force, after WWII. He was younger.

DT: Where you enlisted or drafted, and at what time?

JC: I was drafted July 24, 1942.

DT: What age were you when you went into the service?

JC: 21.

DT: Why don't you talk about your experience in the service starting with gunnery camp or boot camp and moving on up.

JC: I was inducted in Utica, and I didn't go home. I asked for Air Force there. I went right from Utica down to Camp Upton, Long Island. I wasn't there too long either, about 4 hours. I caught another train, and I went to Atlantic City, New Jersey into a reception center there for Air Force for basic.

I finished basic in Dunn Engineer School in Seymour Johnson Field in North Carolina. That was aerial engineer school on A-20 Havoc aircraft the old Boston they called them, twin engine dive bomber.

I finished there and went to gunnery training Fort Meyers, Florida. Flew old AT-6s; that was air-to-air firing 30 caliber. I finished there, got my rating staff sergeant, and that

was quite a jump. One rating. We went to Oklahoma City on the A-20s. Did all of our crew training, joined crews up there, did all of our crew training. Transferred to Lake Charles, Louisiana for combat, low altitude combat bombing practice, in the Gulf. I went home on leave and come back of [Elfa 00:02:51] was gone. They moved everything out of there due to the heavy bombardment deal, built up for heavy bombardment in Germany.

They transferred me to Moses Lake, Washington on 17s. I'd never even seen one before. I seen them crack up a couple of those, and I said, "Well, this is not for me." They had a sign on the bulletin board there, they said, "Immediate combat service, Rapid City, South Dakota", and I put my name at the top of the list. I'd been flying 13 months, and I didn't like the looks of going through training again on those. I went to Rapid City, joined a good crew.

I went on emergency training for turrets in the 17. They used me. The crew was a great crew. I joined them. We went to Brooksville Air Base in Florida for some special training on a glide bomb. Left there and went up to Bangor, Maine, Blue West, Greenland. Meeks Field, Iceland, into Scotland. The first thing I knew I was England, down in Station 107 Grafton Underwood. Station 106, that was where we started our combat tour.

DT: Why don't we discuss your war experience in as much detail as you feel comfortable. Any significant missions that you were on, or other events that you felt were significant.

JC: A lot of expectations for all of us for that first mission. I think this is one that stuck out in my mind. It wasn't a tough mission or nothing like that, it was just get one in, and get the feel of things, because that was a bad joint over there. They figured if you flew 6 you were lucky. At that time we had to fly 25.

After we got that first mission in, the crew really settled in. We had a lot of responsibility to each other to try to do the best job you can as your position. We went on and went up very fast. We were flying lead in 7 missions, that's how many aircraft we were losing. That helped us, because the farther up in the formation you were the better off you were. There was two missions that were real, real tough for us. One was that infamous Schweinfurt. [Auschileven 00:05:33] and Schweinfurt. Tough, tough missions. Heavy flash, a lot of fire.

There was a lot of fighter activity, I mean the worst we had ever seen it. We got shot up pretty bad on that mission. We had to join another crew, lost an engine. It was a dark day for the air force. We lost an awful lot of planes on that mission. That was the one that we survived. I figured that was the one that probably we had had it, but we didn't. We got later in the mission, our pilot finished ahead of us, and we broke up into crews, different pilots. Two of my buddies got killed with another crew. Four of them went down and were prisoners of war with another crew. I finished up with a Lieutenant [inaudible 00:06:51]. Great fella, great guy. I didn't really know him that long. I flew two

missions with him, two very vital missions. I finished on Berlin, May 7, 1944. You see these guys getting out and kissing the ground, I got out and kissed the hard stein. The cement.

DT: What were your specific duties on the plane?

JC: I flew ball turret. If you ever see a picture of B-17 flying you see that little cone ball. Good position. Dangerous position to try to get out of it, but everything was normal it was a very efficient place to fly because it was warm, and you had a good view of everything. You could see the bombs. Boom, boom, boom, and all that stuff going on. It was an important gun position because that was a very vulnerable area of the ship like the nose was. I enjoyed it because it had such a view of the action of the bombs off those targets. It was really something to watch that. Really something to watch it. It's unexplainable unless someone could really sit there.

You could watch them fall, go out of the bomb bay, taking right down and watch them go. As long as there was no clouds, which happened a lot over there. There was an awful lot of targets we had good visibility. That was the job. It was knowing your position, know when to ... Be awake. If you're under attack you had to be awake. There was nothing you could do about the flak. Those shells would bust and the black smoke come right back around that turret. You didn't know where the shell was, but you just sit there and hope it didn't have your number on it. That's about the way it was.

DT: After the war what did you do?

JC: I finished May 7, '44 and I had immediate orders to go to another British base, [Hailsham 00:09:11], little town up north England, north of London 150 miles. We trained some British crews on 17s. They were going to use them with a big radar unit in the bombardiers compartment. They cleaned it out and put a big radar. It sent out signals to screw up German radio on the invasion. I was through before the invasion even.

Then I thought maybe I would go home, and I didn't. I got orders to go up to this combat school which I had come through previously. It was a combat school on turrets only. They sent me up there instructing. I liked that. I think I passed on a lot of knowledge to gunners that were coming in there that really weren't trained as well as they should be, I don't think. They had a big push on there. A lot of the guys coming in didn't have time to really learn their positions and learn their guns. I think I really helped a lot of guys out there. How to dress even. It was cold up there. 45 below zero. You got 30,000 feet you want to have some equipment on that was adequate and know how to dress. I think along the way I helped a lot of people right there on my experiences.

DT: What were your first reactions of coming back to the states?

JC: When they gave me my orders to go home, I went to Liverpool which is a western

coastal city. There was a big sea port. Kind of like Atlantic City, they had a lot of parks and amusement stuff. They asked me if I wanted to fly home, or if I wanted to go by ship, and I said, "Well, I've never been on the ocean." I would probably never get another chance, so I adapted to come home. I come home on the USS America, that was the old West Point. Nice big ocean liner. It wasn't a little ... Real nice big ship. Got back in Boston and we landed at Pier 5, fish pier, Pier 5 there. The first thing they did they took us down we had steak and milk. That was my impression right there. Boy, I really hit the spot. Then I went on home by train, way up to Harrisville. Had to take a bus from Watertown. Had a very enjoyable 30 days at home.

DT: Where did you go from there? What did you do for a career after the war?

JC: I went right back to Atlantic City for R&R. They checked your teeth, gave you a good physical, went all over you see if you had all your marbles. Psychiatrists, doctors, everything. Then they sent me to Nashville, Tennessee. I went home to Phoenix and married my wife, Florence. Then I went back to Nashville and she came down by train. We had a nice time together down there. It was paid vacation for her and me both. We didn't have to spend a lot of money on a honeymoon. We had a nice time. She had to go back home. I got transferred west in Kentucky, then out to Fort George Wright, Washington.

I will never forget this Dr. Black. He says to me, "You want to go home or would you like to go to the Pacific." I said, "That first statement you made sound good to me," so I opted to go home. I was discharged in October 12, 1945.

DT: What have you done since that time, briefly?

JC: I got out of the service, come back, Florence and I had our first born, Jack, our first born boy. I went to work in a little paper mill there in Phoenix. There were a lot of them there at that time. They're gone now. I worked for an old timer there, old Erv Wood. Very nice man. I told him, "I'm not going to stay with you," but he was very good to me. Then I got into the machinists trade. I worked 18 years down [SheerRight 00:13:52] in Fulton. Then I accepted a job with the county [inaudible 00:13:58]. I got a lot of knowledge of machine work, but my eyes were starting to bother me a little bit. This opportunity looked good, and I was up there 18 years on state retirement so I did all right. That was a good place to work. I enjoyed it up there.

DT: Where do you live right now?

JC: 9498 Pendergast Road, Phoenix, New York. It's Onondaga County [inaudible 00:14:24] it's on the west side of the river. I built that house in 1958 with a lot of help from Uncle Sam. I had a certificate of eligibility on my service. 4% mortgage. That will make people think about someday. We did very well, my wife and I did. One thing we lost our oldest boy in '68.

We have a son, Bill, and his wife Jacqueline. Nice people, and two great grandchildren. Brian and Tonya. Tonya's 12 Brian's 10. I have a little outboard motor/lawn mower repair business that I run at home. I have for years. I'm glad I got it now because it gives me something to do. I'm 74, and sure glad to still be here.

DT: We have some photos that John has brought along. He's going to point out some of the things about the planes that he was on, out of the newspaper articles that he was featured in or that his plane was featured in.

JC: Here's one. This is a nice picture of the Fuddy Duddy. That's a local. It's a 17, it's been re-established. That's been at the Fulton Air Show. You can see this bomber is a four engine bomber. They had the top turret here, a ball turret down here, had the pilot and the copilot and engineer were up here. The engineer was your top turret gunner. It had two waist gunners. One on each side. The radio operator had a gun that fired out of the top. Your bombardier and navigator were in the cluster in the nose. They each had a hand held 50. They later put a chin turret on this because it was vulnerable in the nose, and it give it two extra 50 caliber machine guns. Then the tail. They had a twin 50 turret in there which was a hot spot to ride there, because there were a lot of tail attacks, and a lot of front end attacks. It was a long range bomber. Our longest mission on that thing was 15 hours, so it could go a few miles.

Here's a picture that one time was secret. They wouldn't allow it. It's kind of hard to see here, but underneath that 17 you can see there two glide bombs. These were 2000 pound bombs that had a fuselage, a mechanical fuselage on them with a gyro. You dropped them and it controlled it. You could bomb from 60 miles away on a target. That was nice. You stay out of the flak. They never used that bomb much due to saturation bombing. They were afraid they would kill a lot of people that weren't really active in the service, you know. Killing kids and stuff.

Here's a nice article that was in the paper recently, I say a couple years ago, of my crew. It shows the 17. That was before we went overseas. That is one of my favorite memories right there, of those guys. I'm right here on the right. This is Eddie Hill from Texas. He's the radio operator. He was a prisoner of war. This is Jess Pond and he's all right now. He's down in Mississippi, been sick lately. He was a waist gunner. Tom Farrow was top turret engineer. He just died 2 years ago. Great guy from Delaware. Red Carcher, he was from Allison Park, Pennsylvania. Real nice fellow. He got killed; he was a tailgunner. Norbert Carcher, from Minnesota. Real nice fellow. He was a right waist gunner, and he got killed. This is our copilot, Ralph Alloway. He's from Kansas, and he's fine, doing well. Don Akerson, he's down in Tappan, New York, our bombardier. Real nice guy. I neighbor a lot with this guy. He comes up and get out and visit him. Morris A. Bushpa, he was our pilot. He was from Maine. Marvelous pilot. He got killed, but he got killed in the states after the war. He bought a C-47 and he got killed flying it out in Washington state. That was our navigator, Bob Hock, from Minerton, Ohio. He just died a couple years ago. Great crew.

Here's a picture here that was taken down in Kansas City when we were on a reunion, which we did every 2 years for quite a few years. Ready Bob? This is a picture that was taken the day after I finished. This was taken May 8, 1944 in front of a new aircraft. That aircraft had just arrived. You can see there's no battle paint on it. It's all aluminum. Beautiful ship. That's the chin turret, you can see a good picture of it there. That was an addition to our old ship. This isn't my combat garb I'll tell you. I just put this stuff on just to take this picture. Your combat suits were much more bulkier and heated. You had a heated suit. I just put that on so I looked good at my finale.

DT: Thank you very much, John, for coming in and sharing some of your war memories with us.

JC: It's a pleasure to do it. I'm very glad to do it.

DT: Our country is lucky to have patriots and soldiers like you. Thank you.