

**Robert Wesley McClurg
Veteran**

**Interviewed on 24 April 2005
At Rome Free Academy High School, Rome, NY**

Q: Good morning. Could you please state your name and rank?

RM: My name is Robert W. McClurg. My rank is Lieutenant Colonel USMCR.

Q: Did you enlist or were you drafted?

RM: No. I enlisted.

Q: How did your family feel about this decision?

RM: My dad died when I was four years old. My mother, my brother and my sister, I was the youngest of the three kids. But, I started out in New Castle, Pennsylvania and I ended up in Syracuse, New York.

Q: Why did you chose the Marine Corps?

RM: I chose the Marine Corps because back in 1939, I was enlisted in the Two Leaders Class in Quantico, Virginia. Two Leaders Class in Quantico, Virginia if you went six weeks in your junior year and six weeks in your senior year to the Marine Corps training, you would then come out as a Marine 2nd Lieutenant.

But in the meantime, Pearl Harbor happened. When Pearl Harbor happened, I was at college in my senior year and in my senior year I took flight training. I figured here's one course that maybe I can pass.

Q: Do you feel your training adequately prepared you to fly during the war?

RM: Oh yeah. Actually what happened, I got nine other guys to join the Navy Air Corps. They told me we wouldn't have to write our thesis. We wouldn't have to take our exams. We would just graduate. That sounded all good to them but these guys were football players and basketball players and here's little me had convinced them they should join with me.

Well, the Lieutenant JG told me that he had to talk to the Dean of Men. When he came back to the campus two weeks later he said, "You're going to have to take your exams." I said I'm dead. He said "Why". "These guys I told them they wouldn't have to take their exams and wouldn't have to write their thesis. They're going to kill me. They're twice my size."

So he said "Well get a hold of them and we'll go up to the grill and have a Coke." I was going to Westminster College at the time. We went up there and he said "Don't worry

about passing your exams. They're looking for pilots." They're looking for anybody to get in and help stem this war that's going to happen.

So, we went to Philadelphia Navy Yard as unit of ten, I was the only one that turned out to be a Marine. The rest turned out to be Navy. I got my Marine commission after I graduated from flight school. They got their Navy commission as Ensign. I became a 2nd Lieutenant.

Q: According to your book *On Boyington's Wing*, you were shipped from San Diego to Hawaii. What was the experience like being on a ship?

RM: When I checked into Hawaii, the Colonel down there wanted to look at my log book. He looked at it and said I don't know how you got here. I almost said I came by boat. You don't say that to a Navy man. I said, "I came by ship." He said, "No, you don't have enough hours to go anywhere." He said, "Before you leave this island", that's Hawaii, "You will get more training." Three days later, I was in New Caledonia. The orders had never been cut. I went from New Caledonia to (unclear) to Espiritu Santos and from there in a pool in Espiritu Santos. I was also on another island, Canton and I think I told you, New Caledonia.

Q: What was the weather like in these areas?

RM: The weather there was not bad at all but the weather in the Pacific was very unpredictable I found out later on.

Q: How did that affect your job as a pilot?

RM: It affects you an awful lot because we had no working navigation boards in our Corsair. We had to do it all by dead reckoning. Dead reckoning is when you take with your compass you aim in on something here. If I aim in on something here and I am two degrees off by the time you get 220 miles away, you are way off.

Q: Where were you when you first saw combat?

RM: First talking about Espiritu Santos. That's in the New Hebrides. I was there as a replacement pilot but when they looked at my record, I only had 21 hours of fighter time. Most pilots or instructors and so forth come over with 125 hours that they had flown fighter planes. I only had twenty one and a half hours. That was in the Brewster Buffalo and that flew like a rock.

Q: What events do you remember from that first day of combat?

RM: The first real battle that we got into, we had thirty Japs come down through us from a high cumulus cloud. They were trying to get at the dive bombers below who were bombing their strip. We ended up shooting down twelve of them and they ended up shooting down only one of us which made us feel real good.

Q: How did you become part of the Black Sheep Squadron?

RM: I was put in a replacement pool and Pappy said before you do anything, you've got to check out in a Corsair. So, you sit in this Corsair for three days and learn where all the instruments are, the lights, the trim tabs and everything else then I'll come down and I'll ask you a few questions. If you can answer those questions, you get airborne.

There was another guy being checked out the same time I was being checked out in a different Corsair sitting somewhere else (unclear). His name was Shorty. He said to remember that this airplane had a lot of torque which means when you push that big throttle forward, that airplane wants to go to the right.

We were in strips that were lined with palm trees. You can see them right in that picture there (points to picture). Don't dare get that Corsair into the palm trees or you'll die.

I took off, off the stick, off the rudder. I took a few (unclear) with be but I got up to seven thousand feet, did my stall landings, come into land, I bounced it – you were only supposed to do one – but I kind of enjoyed it. I got to the fire wall, got up and around again and landed. So, Pappy came down in the jeep. I said, "How did Shorty do?" He said, "I'll talk about it later" He said, "You enjoy that?" I said, "It was great!" He said, "You're a liar!"

I didn't say anything more than that. I just waited for his next remark. He said, "This airplane scared the holy Jesus out of me. I will tell you one thing. You fly like a big bag of error" What's an error? He said, "You are never going to get home." "I am eight thousand miles away from home. My mama never told me that" "Eight thousand miles away from home, there's only one way you are going to get home kid. I have to teach you some fighter tactics. I have to teach you a lot of things." He said, "You will have to be my wingman for a while"

My dad died, as I said before, when I was four years old. He took me under his wing and he taught me fighter tactics. He taught me a lot of things that I didn't know before and as I said to other people this morning, there are three reasons I am here: God put me on this earth, the Corsair got me through the Pacific and if it hadn't been for Pappy I wouldn't be talking to you today because he taught me many things.

Q: Could you show us that picture and tell us about the people in it?

RM: This picture is a picture of the squadron. There were 51 pilots to begin with. Today, there's fourteen of us. That doesn't mean we all got killed in the Pacific. Some of us died in old age. Some must have got lost at sea. That's a big ocean. The other thing is if I had to do it over again, I would do it over again if I knew I was coming out with all my fingers and toes.

This picture right here. This is Pappy. That's me sitting next to him. There are about, we had nine aces in our squadron.

I'll tell you a story that happened. I gave you a picture showing the ball bats and the hats and that was done because our intelligence officer sent away to St. Louis. They were the leading baseball team at that time and they told him we'll send you a ball bat for every ace in your squadron. We'll send you a St. Louis ball cap for everyone who shot down a Jap. Almost all of us had shot down a Jap. I was fortunate enough to get seven. The guy next to me got nine. Then we go over to Pappy. He got twenty six or twenty eight, this is later on. Then we go from him to our double ace John Bolt. He got six with us flying a Corsair then went to Korea and flew the Phantom jet and shot down five MiGs. So, he was a double ace.

Now those pilots, the only one in the front row that's left is me. This happens. I would say the answer to anything that is creating history and this is part of history this is the most important thing. What we did, we were trained to do what we did. The most important this is camaraderie between these pilots and each other.

If we had compass didn't work, you had a wingman who had one that worked. So, you had to stay with your wingman. If you were going to get shot down or the engine caused trouble, they would know where you went down if you had a wingman with you. It's a big ocean. That's why there is camaraderie – staying with your wingman or your flight leader.

Q: I see the symbol of the Black Sheep on your hat. Can you tell us about that symbol?

RM: Yes. This symbol – and I gave you one of these this morning – was done by - they were going to call the Black Sheep “Boyington's Bastards”. They couldn't do it at that time because they don't print those words then. They print it now.

Instead, we became Black Sheep. Notice that the cross runs the wrong way. It should run the other way. They've got twelve stars and one thirteen star. The Corsair is at the top of it. They became Boyington's Black Sheep Squadron.

Q: What were you and Black Sheep Squadron asked to do in your missions?

RM: Most of my missions had to be done by flying wing on Pappy Boyington or flying wing of whoever was your leader at that time. My job was to protect his tail. We protected each other's tail because we had six 50 caliber machine guns. We protected each other's tails by turning inside each other. No Jap could come at you because you had wings (unclear). No Jap could come at you from that side because you had guns pointed at them. That was called the “thatch weave” and we protected each other that way.

Q: Were you ever used to support field operations or Navy vessels?

RM: We protected the Navy vessels coming up the line. We were not exposed to the common cause events later in the war. We had to protect our supply ships coming up the line. We had to patrol over them and shoot down dive bombers or any other bombers who would try to sink these ships.

Q: What was day to day life like when you weren't flying?

RM: I'll tell you, it wasn't as bad as it sounds. I was a fisherman. I caught a lot of fish over there. I caught a 54" Barracuda, 35 pound Red Snappers. I used to gather Oysters and put them in my socks, put it with powdered milk and that made Oyster stew. I collected shells. I made knives out of blades and put handles on them. We enjoyed life. I made a Kayak which was covered with airplane cloth. I used to go out and collect cat's eyes and make rings out of them from Australian Flores

Q: What areas in the South Pacific did you encounter the most Japanese resistance?

RM: The most Japanese resistance that we came against was really Rabaul. Rabaul was the second largest Japanese outpost other than Truk. It was Rabaul, Truk, Japan.

Q: Do you feel that the American planes that you flew were better than the Japanese planes?

RM: Absolutely. The plane that we were flying, the Corsair, had armament behind your seat. It could climb faster than the Jap, dive faster than the Jap. We had (unclear) wing tanks. We'd take off and our wing tanks and when all the gas was out of it, there would be fumes in there from the gasoline. We could press a button and a CO2 bottle would fill that thing with Carbon Dioxide and it would never ignite if you got shot at. We found out that the best way to get the Japs instead of our six .50 caliber machine guns crossing at 800 yards we had them cross at 440 yards those big shells, the .50 calibers, would cut a box car in two. We found out that if we took the armor placing ammunition out of our things and put more tracers in there with more shells that would cause the Zero to burn when it got hit we found out that we could shoot them down quicker. So, we did learn a lot by just participating in the battles.

Q: Did you ever meet the enemy outside of air combat?

RM: I met the enemy at air shows last year. I'm a little guy. They were a head shorter than I am. My wife went out and met one of the women. They asked us to come forward. They had Zero's parked out there. They had three Zero's. This Japanese lady said to my wife, "I'm a Japanese fighter pilot's wife." Julie, my wife, said to her, "I'm an American fighter pilot's wife." they hugged each other and said why couldn't it have been like this. There's no reason to do what we did. I'm against the war 100%. If I had to do it over again for the experience, yes I would. I don't believe our boys should be in Iraq. I think we're wasting humanity. I am not for telling to anybody. I was a victim of circumstances. To keep your life going, I had to do what I did.

Q: While on a mission, did you have any close calls?

RM: Yes. I did. I had eighty one missions. I had a close call three different times. I was up at twenty two thousand feet. The engine cut out on me. I came down to twelve thousand feet and got it going again. Ahead of me there were two Japs flying in formation. I thought that if this engine is acting up, I am going to take a couple of boys with me.

So, I came up behind them and shot the wingman down and he turned and blew up going this way. The other guy flew straight ahead. I thought he's got to be stupid not to know where your wingman is. I ate him up from behind and he blew up. That was a close call.

The first close call I had is when I shot at the first Zero and I don't know if I told you that story or not. We were on a mission. The first mission we were on I saw these Japs come out at thirty thousand feet in the air from the clouds. They were trying to get to the bombers.

I see this guy turning his lights on and off. Remember we're in a dog fight which you shouldn't do because they could turn inside. You could not dive and you could not climb. I saw him turn his lights on and off and I looked and he wasn't turning his lights on and off. He was shooting .30 millimeter shells at me. He's putting him out here and (unclear) I blew him up just as he went by me. That was my first.

The other close deal, I brought a plane back that we pretty well shot up and I had to land it with one landing gear. The tire was flat on the other side. When I got finished landing it, I went up into a revetment and settled back down. I get up and I stood by a palm tree. As you might know what I was doing scared to death. Pretty soon the "mech" came up and said, "Sir, do you know how much oil you had in your plane?" I said "No". He said, "One cup". That's calling it close.

The other one was I had two .31 caliber Japanese machine gun bullets come through my canopy, my hood, and as a result of it, went out the other side. Either I had my head turned because we stretched a cord from here to hear or else I had my seat all the way down. It would have taken me and that's the end of the \$87,000 air plane and the \$25,000 trainee that was in the air plane.

Q: How many planes did the Black Sheep Squadron shoot down as a unit?

RM: We shot down over a hundred some planes. Our division of four planes, Pappy Boyington shot down twenty eight. Chris Magee shot down nine. I shot down seven. Don Moore shot down four. Of those four planes, I am the last pilot still above ground.

Q: Did you shoot down any Japanese ships?

RM: We strafed many barges. I will give you that information. That's why I have this

here. This is true facts that I am going to give you now. I think what you should do, can you make a copy of this? That answers your question. It tells you everything.

Q: I see four ships that you hit and twenty barges.

RM: Let me see the second page.

Q: Was that information hard to get a hold of?

RM: Would this be hard to get a hold of? Some people don't have it. I kept all my stuff together.

Q: Could you show us a copy of the book that you wrote with this information?

RM: Yes. This is the book that I wrote with my co-author (shows book). This is me as the author. Wait until I put these things in here. You can read about me there. This is my co-author who was an engineer. It took us six and a half, seven years to write this book. The book was written to straighten out the people that believed the Black Sheep show...was rather strange. It had to be done that way because who is going to watch somebody taking off in the dark in a rainstorm. There's no romance in that. The only way you could make it romantic is to put someone in it and the kids would watch it and the women would watch it. That's why I wrote this book. I straightened them all out.

These are the facts from the Pentagon which is the place that had all of the information that no one could get a hold of during the war. These are the facts from our intelligence officer's reports. The log book, this book and the intelligence reports will give you true facts of what the Black Sheep were all about.

Before I leave here, I think you've got to take this picture because I am going to answer your question this. I had two tours of duty. We shot ninety six airplanes down. The third tour, we shot down fifty seven. That's one hundred and fifty three total airplanes that we shot down. Ninety six enemy planes were destroyed in aerial combat. Of those planes, ninety three of them were over enemy territory. Thirty four enemy planes were probably destroyed in air combat which means they didn't catch on fire. You can't count them as a real kill if they don't catch on fire. You can't count them. Fifty enemy planes were damaged in aerial combat. Enemy planes destroyed on the ground: about twenty one. That's two hundred and one air planes.

We shot up a hundred AK barge, a fifty foot AK barge, a seventy five foot Japanese operated Chinese junk destroyed, a seventy foot steam launch destroyed. Twenty Japanese barges destroyed. Three Japanese barges loaded with troops destroyed. That was something else. One raft loaded with enemy troops destroyed. Fifteen other craft probably destroyed. One hundred and twenty three Japanese bivouac areas. Four Japanese airfields destroyed, Kahili, (unclear). We intercepted and successfully broke up flights of Japanese fighter planes, bombers and so forth that were trying to bomb our ships coming up the line.

I would suggest that you take a picture of this. Take the picture of the first page and the second page of the people that died and so forth.

I had eighty one missions that went on and when I came out of the Pacific, I'd flown a thousand two hundred hours. If you take that picture then give it back to me, then you'll know the story.

Q: How did you keep track of how many planes were shot down?

RM: We had a log book. The log book – every time you went on a flight – with what plane you flew, the (unclear) number of the plane, what you were going out (for), you were doing a fighting sweep, you're going out to strafe, or you were going to escort bombers and that flight log book kept track of it. I kept accurate track of it all. That's how I came to write my book.

Q: Was there every a competition between pilots to get kills?

RM: Constantly competition. The competition that went on when I was there was the competition between Joe Foss who shot down twenty six Japanese airplanes over Guadalcanal and Pappy Boyington. There was competition. In Europe, the competition was even worse than that but they had more airplanes to shoot at. I just finished a book that told about that competition.

Q: What does it take to become an ace?

RM: It takes five planes that have burnt and were witnessed and crashed in a certain place. Probable is one that smokes and doesn't burn. You can't count that as one to bring you to the ace status. Of course I told you I shot down seven but I was trained to do that. I shot down a float plane (unclear) that was a Japanese plane.

In aerial combat following Pappy up through a loop one time, he shot down a plane and he flew through the debris of it and the oil got over the front of his windshield. He couldn't see out so we had to go home. But, I'm just lucky to be able to talk about these things.

Q: Who do you remember the most from your service?

RM: People I remember most probably were my squadron mates. Pappy Boyington. Chris Magee. Don Moore. Jim Hill. Ed Harper. John Bolt, our double ace.

Q: How was Pappy Boyington as a leader?

RM: Pappy Boyington, as a leader, was very aggressive. He believed in a job being done. He could care less for medals. He was sent over there to get the job done. Did he hate the Japanese? No. He only hated what they did and we was of the opinion that they had a job to do and we had a job to do. Now it's the one who survives.

Q: When and how was he captured?

RM: That was a story in itself and I'm glad you asked this question. Four days before, I

was flying wing on Pappy and I wanted to be with him when he broke the record which was twenty six airplanes, twenty five airplanes. I was going to the jonnie at night. I had dysentery and going to the jonnie at night. I tripped over a tent rope fell and sprained my wrist.

When I sprained my wrist, they x-rayed it. They x-rayed it with what x-ray machines they had over there. They said you might have cracked it but you didn't break it but you can't fly any more with that kind of a (unclear) because you are a detriment to the squadron. If you can't activate holding the stick back, pushing the throttle forward, do this or that, you might run into your own men.

On that particular day, Captain Ashmun was right there. He has recurring malaria. He was supposed to get up at 3:30 in the morning and he was supposed take the flight with Pappy but he had recurring malaria so we threw blankets over him and I went down and told somebody to put my name up on the board, take his name down.

I got in my airplane to take off. The doctor got wind of this – the flight surgeon – he pulled in front of the Corsair and wouldn't move. I had to get out – stop the airplane – and get out of the airplane. Then, they went to Bougainville, gassed up, and Captain Ashmun was able to catch them at Bougainville and he became Pappy's wingman that day.

They went over in a fighter sweep to Rabaul. They were at twenty thousand feet and Pappy decided that there was nothing to shoot at so he's going to go below the cirrus clouds which wad down around ten or twelve thousand feet. He went down with George Ashmun.

As they got below the clouds, eight Japanese fighter planes jumped them. Ashmun shot down one. Pappy shot down a couple. As Pappy looked at Ashmun, Ashmun was heading straight down, not straight down but in a gentle glide. He yelled to him, "Roll over! (unclear) Get out of there!" Evidently, he had been killed in his own airplane. That was the end of Ashmun. Then they shot Pappy down.

They blew up his dashboard with 30 mm. He rolled over and bailed out of his airplane. His leg hit the vertical stabilizer and broke his leg. He hit the water just as his chute opened. He pulled his Mae West. It was full of holes. So, that wouldn't keep him up. What he had to do was get a hold of the life raft which was encased just above the parachute.

He was able to get into his life raft. He floated around for quite a while and saw this sub coming. He thought it was one of ours. Well, it was a Japanese sub. They picked him up and they took him to Rabaul. They kept him there at Rabaul. Finally, they took him to Truk.

As he landed on Truk – this was later on, of course – the Navy hit them with 500 pound bombs. Well I am not going to get killed by the Japs, I am going to get killed by our own people. He didn't get killed.

There was an intelligence officer whose name was Honda just like the Honda car. He said, we've got to get back to the mainland Japan because he knew MacArthur was bypassing these islands. Those people were starving. The Japs were starving.

They ended up. They took him to Truk. He worked for the lady in the kitchen and he got to be very familiar with her. She was a real old lady. He had taken hand fulls of lard and eaten it. He said it tasted like honey. That's how starved they were.

Pappy made it back to the mainland of Japan. Harold Stassen who ran for the presidency found out. It was written in flour on the roof in flour, "Pappy is here" So, he went in and told the Japanese Colonel who was running the camp he said "I want to take Pappy out of here". The Colonel said, "You can't" He said, "You better go out the door and see what's happening". He didn't know that we had gone as far as we had. That's the last he saw of the Colonel. Pappy was brought back to Hawaii and then brought back to the states.

Q: Did he tell you any stories about when he was in the prisons?

RM: Oh yes. There were stories. There was a guy names Halloran. Halloran was the one who gave Pappy's eulogy at Arlington Cemetery. He was a B-29 pilot. Of course he got shot down and he and Pappy got close together.

You can't fool with the Japanese because if you don't cooperate a little bit with them, they're going to eliminate you.

They had one Lieutenant JG. He said, "I am only going to tell them my name, rank and serial number, Pappy". He said, "You can't do that. They'll kill you." Two days later, they killed him.

Q: Do you know how long Pappy was held prisoner for?

RM: How long was he a prisoner? Sixteen months.

Q: Did you perform any unusual services or duties while in the Black Sheep Squadron?

RM: Yes. I kept them with fresh fish. I took care of Pappy's pocket book when he got in wrestling matches. He loved to wrestle and he if got a little bit of sauce, he'd wrestle anybody. He came up to Joe Foss one day. Joe Foss is 6'3". Pappy said to Joe Foss, "We've never had a wrestling match have we?" Joe Foss said, "Yes, we are not going to have one." Pappy went over and put a lock on him. Joe Foss threw him in a corner. Pappy said, "I guess that's the end of that"

Q: I see in your book that you took leave. Where did you go for that?

RM: Sydney, Australia.

Q: What did you do while you were there?

RM: Sydney, Australia was paradise. We had never seen any females since we left. Well, we saw females but they had black teeth and (unclear) red hair and they weren't the right thing to attract you.

But we went to Australia for six weeks and then we came back. No, we went to Australia for eight days. We were six weeks up the line and then went back to Australia again for six weeks. We did that two times with eight days in between. But we did not go to Australia, I am correcting myself, we did not go to Australia for six weeks. We went for eight days.

Q: What experiences in your service made the greatest impression on you?

RM: Well, when I came out of the service, I was supposed to go over again on carriers. I went to the west coast and my mother was home. My sister was a Lieutenant JG in the Navy. I decided that I wanted to go home to mom because she was a school teacher who followed me all across the Pacific.

The letters that I wrote to her – if I was in the New Hebrides – I would write to Mrs. N.H. McClurg. She'd get out her map. She was a Geography teacher. He's in the New Hebrides and that's the way she traced me across the Pacific.

Q: Because it had to be kept secret?

RM: Right.

Q: Where were you when the Atomic bombs were dropped on Japan?

RM: I'll tell you, I met the man. I was back stateside. I came back and trained fighter pilots to go over. I was at Marine Air Infantry School. I was in Engineering Officer School. I was in a rocket school. Then I was sent back to Miramar in California. I was due to go out on a carrier then.

Q: What was the hardest part about being a fighter pilot?

RM: The hardest part about being a fighter pilot to me was getting lost over that big Pacific. That's a lot of water out there and I go lost twice. By the grace of God, I did my training well – five minutes, five minutes (makes a square gesture with his hands), five minutes, five minutes. Always know where you started from. The next one is eight minutes.

I came to the conclusion I don't care what it is, if there is a light out there I'm going to land on it. I found out it was my own strip.

Q: That's lucky. Were you ever injured during the war or become sick?

RM: No. I hit my head on the gunsight when I landed with that flat tire. You don't get purple hearts for self-inflicted things.

Q: Did you receive any medals or decorations?

RM: Yes. When Pappy came to the west coast, he was celebrated by *Life* magazine. You've got a picture of that. There were nine of our boys out there. Then he came to the east coast and Harry Truman gave him the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Now, Harry Truman kept him waiting about 45 minutes and Pappy wasn't too happy about that. Had other things to do. When Harry Truman came out he told him "I'm very sorry I kept you waiting. I'd sure like to be you, Pappy." Pappy looked at Truman and said, "I'd rather be you!"

Q: After the war was over, did you keep in touch with Pappy and others.

RM: Yes. We sold War Bonds together. He came to visit me with his fourth wife which was peach. She was a (unclear) alcoholic. They lived in Fresno, California. They came and visited us for four days. He gave speeches and we visited the 174th Fighter boys in Hancock Airfield. We also visited the tank corps.

Q: Beyond all the Hollywood drama that was added, do you think that the movie and television show had accurate information in it?

RM: Well, I'll tell you about that. I was invited to go by Major Chapman who was Gladys Swarthout's husband who was a noted opera singer. I was invited to go to Washington, DC to be interviewed and appear on Milton Berle's program *Let Yourself Go*. On that program was Errol Flynn. Errol Flynn was the most handsome guy you'd ever seen. Of course, he had a million women chasing him around.

So, I met Errol Flynn and I appeared on the program. The main question was "What would be your secret ambition?" I said, "To give my mother a trip to California to see my brother who was working for Boeing Aircraft at the time." He said, "Well, we'll give you a check to do that"

So, I appeared on that program and it was marvelous.

I went to a party on the East River. Major Chapman said you can stay over. I said I had a girlfriend that I knew that lived in New York City in (unclear). I'd like to bring her. Of course, she was a stunning girl. I never married her. She never married me.

Anyway, we went to that cocktail party and I met a lot of Opera singers. They were very down to earth people. I came out of the service, came home, became a manufacturer's rep. selling plumbing and heating to the wholesalers of plumbing and heating.

Q: I also see that you were on the History Channel. What was that experience like?

RM: I've appeared on – I'm not bragging, it's nice to be recognized – I appeared on that and many programs to be interviewed and there were other Black Sheep that were on that program too.

Q: How did all your experiences as a fighter pilot affect your life?

RM: It's affected my life because I'm still living the war. I'm still selling the book. Does it get to be rough sometime? Yes. You wonder sometime how much longer you can hold on playing war. But, that's part of history. That makes me feel a little better. I'm not bragging about what our squadron did, I'm bragging that you people are recognizing history. This should be taught by our kids, the sacrifices that were made. It's like Tom Brokaw said, the Greatest Generation. We were the Greatest Generation because there was no other way around. We were pleased to be part of the Greatest Generation.

Q: What exact medals and decorations did you receive?

RM: I received...I gave somebody that little piece of paper. It has it all on there.

Q: Off the top of your head.

RM: Alright, I received five Distinguished Flying Crosses, eight Air Medals, two Presidential Unit Citations. No squadron has ever been issued two Presidential Citations and our squadron was.

Q: Did you have any Medal of Honor winners in your squadron?

RM: No. Pappy was the only one. He got it posthumously and then when they found out he was a prisoner of war, they gave it to him again. His first wife got rid of the first one by selling it.

Q: I am sure he was happy about that! Did you join any organizations after you retired from the military?

RM: I belonged to the American Legion. I belonged to many sales organizations. I travelled all of New York State except the metropolitan area of New York City.

Q: Do you have any other war stories that you would like to tell us?

RM: The only other war story that I remember that I would like to tell it had to do with Jim Hill. Jim Hill's compass wasn't working and his wingman was headed out of the battle in Rabaul. He was headed the wrong way home. He would have flown out to sea and that would have been the end of him. But Al Johnson saw where he was going and got next to him and told him he was going the wrong way. Jim Hill's compass wasn't working. Al's was and Al brought Jim Hill back.

Q: It seems that compasses stopped working a lot. How can you tell that a compass is not working?

RM: Well if your compass wasn't working and you were alone, you wouldn't know

which direction in a fighter sweep. I had an engine cut out on me and I think that was the day I decided that somebody else was going in the water beside me. That's when I shot down two japs. It was pretty simple because I'm coming up from behind. So, I don't think they were the brightest boys. They could out maneuver you and they shot a lot of us down.

Q: Are there any words of wisdom that you would like to leave us with?

RM: Yes. There is one word of wisdom: L-O-V-E. If we all loved one another, there would be no wars. No one should ever die in a war. That's why I am against Iraq. I'm against any killings that go on. Yes, you did it. I was a victim of circumstances. Love is the most important thing today whether it be man to woman, man to man, woman to woman. If we loved each other like God taught us, we wouldn't have war but that's never to be.

Q: Thank you so much for your time, we really appreciate it.

RM: My pleasure.