

**William Allen
Veteran**

**Bill Payne
Interviewer**

**Interviewed on Date: 4/24/2005
at the American Legion Post 72, Saugerties, NY**

Q: We are at the Lamouree-Hackett Post 72 of the American Legion here at 30 John Street, Saugerties, NY. It is Sunday, April 24th, 2005. With us today we have Bill Allen who was a tail gunner on a B-29 during World War II also his son Robert Allen is here and his granddaughter Rebekah Allen. Our crew Alan Brezinski who is our commander. I'm Bill Payne. We also have Matt Macalrey and Kate Thornton from the Key Club who are our technical advisors and assistants.

Good morning Bill. Thanks for coming.

A: Thank you. Glad to be here.

Q: Bill, you served in World War II in the Air Force. Were you drafted or did you enlist?

A: I volunteered actually through the Elks Program. The Elks Clubs across the country, they were looking for young potential men coming out of high school maybe going to college. Two other guys from Rhinebeck went through that program so I decided to give it a try.

So, I volunteered and went down to New York City (unclear) Palace Theater. I took my exam and passed it. I went home and in December they sent me to Albany to be sworn in. I had a physical up there and I reported to active duty on February 2nd, 1944 at Camp Dix.

Q: In New Jersey?

A: In New Jersey. From Camp Dix, I went to Greensboro, North Carolina. That's where I took my basic training. Nothing unusual there except for learning how to march in cadence you know and getting a rifle and going out on the range and going out in the field for a few days hiking – big hikes sixteen miles something like that with packs on everything like that.

Then we shipped off to.... I took some examinations there- some psycho motive test one thing or another. Anyway, they shipped me down to Arlington, Texas and that was a gunnery school down there. Evidently, in the psycho-motive test I didn't have the coordination or whatever they felt I needed for a pilot. But the other side of that was that I think they needed gunners. Like on a B-29 there was four gunners to a pilot. So, I mean you can see that they were in demand.

So, I went down to (unclear) and had my first flight in an airplane there in an old Hudson, I don't know, B2 or whatever it was. I remember the sergeant there on the first flight he knew that we

were nervous. He said, “You know, they call this the flying coffin.” One guy, like anybody in the gang one guy says, “Well, what do you mean by a flying coffin?” Well, he said, “It will fly if it gets off the runway.” That kind of made us a little nervous (laughs). But anyway, we flew up there and that was pretty good.

We came down and went up in an AT6 – a two seat trainer. They had a 30 caliber machine gun on the back of that. I remember the pilot telling me whatever you do, whatever you do you hang on to that machine gun. You don’t let that thing get out of your hand. He said one guy did. He had gotten into a slip stream and it put a gash right across his forehead.

He said that now we’re going out and there were silhouette targets in the Gulf of Mexico because we were close to the Gulf of Mexico. We were told by the sergeant don’t come back with any ammo. If you do and you tell me you didn’t shoot because there were Mexican’s fishing among those silhouettes that’s the end of you (laughs).

So, the pilot said to me when I wiggle my wings, you stand up. He said it’s going to be a little bit difficult. So, anyway, he wiggled his wings and down we went. I’m seeing the silhouettes and I’m up there with that 30 caliber shooting and strafing them. He goes on up you know and he comes around again. I didn’t know whether I was going to get air sick or what. He comes down again and strafe again. There was no Mexicans in there then.

Then when we get all done shooting, he said to me would you like to take a ride? I said sure. He said remember what I told you. You hang on to that machine gun. I said ok. So, now I am sitting down. I stood up. I had a safety belt latched on to a U-bolt latched to the floor. So, he must have teamed up with another pilot who had a rookie gunner in there too. They get up there and started doing loops and spins and diving and everything you know. I’m just hanging on for dear life (laughs). So, anyway, after he gets done we land see. He said to me as I stepped out. “What did you think of the ride?” I said, “That was pretty good.”

Anyway, we did a lot of... we go up and I was in a B-24. A B-26 was going to tow canvas targets – sleeves out behind. They let them out with a cable. Each gunner on that B-24 was shooting different color tip bullets. When it hit that bag made out of canvas, the paint stuck on to that canvas. When you come down, you could count the number...like if I was shooting yellow, they count the number of yellows. If somebody was shooting blue, they’d count that too.

I happened to be assigned to the Sperry Ball. That’s the underbelly ok. In the ’24 it couldn’t take off or land with that ball extended. You had to pump that ball out. To pump it out, you bring the door up until it’s inside the ship and you climb down in and then it’s like you are in a fetus position in a womb. It was a computerized Sperry Ball and the site reticles was on your foot like on your foot like a brake or a clutch in a car. Your machine gun buttons are right up here and you swung around azimuth, elevation and that.

The other gunners – the waist gunners and whatever they were and the tail gunners had different posts. They let that target out behind that B-26, I bet those guys in that B-26. I'll bet those guys had little experience. We shot and we did that for quite a while. Then they had them on a motor car. They had a target behind a motor car. It was mounds of dirt that shielded it – the mechanics of the car – but the tarp was up above the berms. You stood there in a stationary turret with 50 calibers now and that thing would go around on a track about the eighth of a mile. If you know those midget race tracks. They'd go around there and you'd shoot that target with the 50 calibers.

Then we did a lot of skeet shooting in the back of pickup trucks moving. They'd have these high and low houses on the curves and on the strait away and you went around there and you were locked in on the back of the pickup there with belts to hold you in here. We did a lot of that shooting. A lot of it was shooting out of stationary on the ground.

Q: You were using shotguns for that kind of practice?

A: 12 Gauge pumps. I saw some city kids when they came in at night, they never got the gun up to the shoulder. They got it up to here (points to biceps) and those poor kids they had to go to the infirmary you know and they were right back out there the next day. Their arms were so black and blue. Some of them were bleeding and right back out there the next day doing the same thing.

Finally from there, they sent me to Lincoln, Nebraska. My class was 44-2 I believe it was so they sent us to Lincoln. They said you're going to get a furlough. I wired home to my mother and said send me money. So, she sent me money. They called us out one day and lined us up on the street. They said the names we call out, you go on this side of the street and if your name isn't called out, you stay right there where you are.

They called names and they went on the side of the street. They had about an equal number on both sides now. They said alright, the guys on this side that we called out are going to go home on furlough. The rest of you guys are going for reassignment. They're going to the 8th Air Force in England.

They put us on a train and where to we end up? Clovis, New Mexico. Now we're there with the Central Fire Control System and we're going to learn that on the B-29. I never heard of the airplane. There, we shot more skeet. Did we every shoot skeet. Then, they sent us from there to Harvard, Nebraska. That's where we formed into the 505th.

A lot of the officers, bombardiers, navigators and pilots were already there but now the radio operators started to come in, the central fire control and the other gunners plus the radar operators. We formed into crews. I happened to be lucky and got on to Major Dendy's crew. He became a flight leader of the 42nd squadron.

We flew some old rickety B-29s that were beat up. We flew there and got our orders to....I got a furlough. I think it was 10 days back in Rhinecliff. Then, we went to Kearney, Nebraska. That's

where we picked up our new airplane from Wichita, from Bell Wichita, Kansas – brand spanking new.

So, Major Dendy said come on boys let's hurry it up because there's a front coming in and we don't want to be hung up here. We had all of our B4 bags and everything and duffel bags and threw them up in the plane, climbed up and off we went. We were headed for Mather Field, California. Mather Field was just outside of San Francisco. Mather Field was socked in so we had to go to Fairfield. They never had a B-29 land on that field. I can remember everybody lining up alongside of that barbed wire fence on the runway looking to see if this giant that they never saw before could make it on to that airstrip. Down we came in there just over the mountain and down in. Right away the Colonel of the base he comes out in a jeep. He had the MP's out there and he put security around that plane. If we left that airplane and if we left something in it we couldn't get back to that airplane to get anything.

We stayed overnight there. I remember going out that morning and you could see everybody over by that fence to see this thing take off. Well, Dendy got it off of there. Then, we went into Mather Field and got our orders to go overseas.

We left there, I think, around late afternoon and I remember when Dendy got to the Golden Gate Bridge, he took her down and went under the Golden Gate Bridge and we were headed for John Rodgers Field in Hawaii. We stayed overnight there.

Q: Could you show us a picture of what the B-29 looked like? You brought it and I think this would be a good time to show people what it looked like.

A: This is a schematic (unrolls a large schematic of the B-29).

Q: (unclear)

A: This shows the interior of the plane. It's got a 141 ft. wing span. My position in the tail was 99 ft. from the nose.

Q: (unclear)

A: It had twenty two gas tanks -individual tanks in the wings with a big center wing tank.

Q: Could you point to the position that you were in back there.

A: Right here (points to tail gun position).

Q: (unclear)

A: There was twelve machine guns on the ship in one, four, five turrets. Each one held a thousand rounds per gun so that would be twelve thousand rounds of ammo.

Q: Thanks Bill. So, you got orders to go overseas.

A: Yes. So, we were over there. I think we stayed overnight on John Rodgers Field and took off for Kwajalein. Kwajalein Island. I remember Kwajalein Island the only thing I remember about that was all the palm trees were cut right off. There was no leaves or branches on them just stubs from the Navy bombardment. So, we landed there. We didn't have any ammo on board yet.

Q: Kwajalein was one of the islands that the Marines and the Navy had to take from the Japanese to establish an air base right?

A: Exactly. Most B-29's that were going into Tinian, Saipan and Guam landed in Kwajalein. It wasn't a very big island as I remember. I remember they fueled us up and they loaded ammo in our cans. I remember them telling us you now are in a combat zone. Dendy said, "Now, be on the lookout. Everybody at battle stations and be on the lookout." So, we did and we flew into Saipan. Tinian wasn't ready yet. The Seabee's were still building the runways.

We stayed there about a week on Saipan. Maybe not quite a week. Maybe three days because we made a hop down to Guam and stayed overnight and came right back to Saipan. Now they told us that runway number one was ready on Tinian.

We went in. Dendy teamed up with two others from the 42nd Squadron. Smokey Alsworth was on our right wing and Bob Finch was on our left wing. We formed a three flight plane. We came in and buzzed the field. I remember that they pulled the graders and the road rollers over to the side and let us come in on that coral – the three of us.

Alsworth cut off. He peeled off on the right side and he landed first. Dendy landed second and Finch landed third. Those were the three 29's that were on that field at that time.

We had pulled guard duty on our own planes. The officers didn't do it.

Q: My understanding and you can correct me was that there were still Japanese on different parts of the island still fighting? Correct?

A: Oh yes. When you were on guard duty there you had...I was the operator of a portable generator. We kept that generator...we had a Thompson submachine guns and we always carried our side arm – 45 Colt. There were a couple of carbines there. We were also ready to get that generator going to operate the turrets. The turrets were loaded with machine guns. The hard stands were just cut out from sugar canes. Maybe ten feet and you'd be in the sugar cane.

They had wild pigs around there. I guess wild boar you'd call it. You would here this thrashing through the weed and guys you'd hear shooting at night. They'd go over in the morning and see a pig or something like that. Sometimes they were gooks – they were natives who would come along looking for food and some Japanese got it too you know. But we didn't have any incidents like that.

Then the 67th Seabee's...this is how we got tied up with them. Their commander got with Major Dendy and said look what we would like to do is adopt your airplane. For that, he said if you let us put our logo on your ship, we'll have our artist do it and will also put your logo on too. If you let us do that, you can have the run of our mess hall. We'll do your laundry for you. You come to our theater any time you want to. Come to our PX – any of that. We had the run of their camp site.

Christmas Day, they invited us up for Christmas dinner. I was eating k-rations when we first got - in a pup tent. So, anyway, we got there and went there for the dinner. We had turkey, dressing and mashed potatoes and the whole works you know. I remember guys were coming out saying what do you have for desert. They said, ice cream. Oh, ice cream. I thought I had died and gone to heaven.

After we had dinner, they said come on up to our area up there. We've got a tent and we'd go to the movies that night. OK. It sounded good. They showed us the tent and it was nice. It was canvas but it was built over 2x4's and 2x2's and it had a platform. You had to take a couple steps to get in. Each one had a foxhole and had clotheslines between the tents.

It's getting dark and we throw blankets out on the grass. The theater was slanted. The movie just came on and all of the sudden the air raid sirens blow. Christmas night. Everything blacked out. The Marines, they had security. They were responsible for security of the island and they had 90mm Anti-Aircraft guns.

They hit the searchlights. I was standing with this guy and he said to the two guys I was with he said come on with me we're going for our foxhole. These guys they knew where they were going. We're running between the tents and I'm getting hung up on sheets, guy's pairs of pants and one thing after another in getting in your face and you're fighting them. I thought I was going to lose those guys.

Finally, I did get there and then fell into the fox hole. We were looking and watching the search lights. We could see searchlights from Saipan. Those Japs came from Iwo and they were Betty Bombers. The Army gave them code names. All male names were fighter planes – Zero, Zinc, Oscar, Val, Tony. Bombers were after females – Betty. That was their main stay – a twin engine Betty. Finally, the Marines on Tinian got that Betty up there in the lights. They opened up with the 90mm's.

At that time, 7th Fighter Command had Black Widow, P-51's. They were up there. Over Saipan, we could see huge explosions and I would imagine they were either ammo dumps or they were oil drums or whatever or B-29's. That's what they were really after. We saw that one Betty get shot down. I don't know if it was from a fire or from anti-aircraft flak. I don't know but that was their welcoming to us on Tinian Island.

Q: You have a picture here of your ship and your crew. Can you show that to the camera now?

A: Yes. This here was taken immediately coming back from Nagoya. Nagoya, Japan. General Davies is there shaking hands with Major Dendy. This is our crew. There's one gentleman in here right up –let's see. Right here. Joe (unclear). He was a flight surgeon. They occasionally went up with crews to measure and to analyze the stress that was created by the length of the mission.

The average length of a mission was about 14 hours. The longest one that we made was to Koriyama which is 150 miles northwest of Tokyo. 17 hours it was. So, they're pretty long.

Q: You have your picture in here too. Right Bill? (Points to lower right corner)

A: My picture is right here (points to lower right corner). The dog tags are hanging out of me.

Q: That's the name of your ship the *Indian Maid*.

A: The *Indian Maid*.

Q: The Seabee insignia is on the side there.

A: (unclear)

Q: The Sea "Bee". We've got a lot of Seabee's in our Post. Sorry to interrupt you.

A: That's alright.

Q: So, after that air raid, you started making missions?

A: We did some training missions. We went to islands that were still inhabited with the Japs but they were abandoned. I won't say they were totally abandoned. Like for Pagan. Pagan was just north of Saipan about a hundred and maybe twenty five miles.

We'd go up there. There was an airfield up there at one time but it was loaded with pot marks. It looked like Swiss cheese from the constant bombing and everything. I think the Japs didn't want anybody to know that they were there because if they did we would really go in. So, we pounded that one.

My first mission was against Iwo Jima and we got credited for that mission. We went up there to soften it up for what we didn't know at the time was the invasion. We pounded that pretty good. I distinctly remember that. We led the formation, one of the formations over there. As we were coming off the target, we were supposed to have P-38 escorts. They didn't show. Anyway, we come off of the target and I remember the bombardier who was up in the (unclear) in front called out a fighter or a plane about 12 o'clock level. That's all he said.

So we are sitting there and flak is up there and there are phosphorous bombs. The Japs go up above the formations and drop these phosphorous bombs and they explode above the formation maybe a couple of hundred feet or so. They look like a sky rocket on the 4th of July where the

balls come down you know and the stars come down. They throw out this white phosphorous. It all comes down and if any of that landed on your wing or your fuselage it would burn right through it but they weren't too successful with it.

Anyway, he kept saying. "It's coming in closer. It's coming in closer." Finally, I'm turning around trying.... We have a man on our right wing and a man on our left wing. So, I'm turning around waiting to see if I can pick up this object he's talking about. He didn't say what kind of plane it was or whether it was a fighter or bomber or what it was. He didn't know whether it was an American or what it was.

So, it kept coming in. Finally, I turn around and here comes this camouflage olive drab plane with a big red ball right behind his cockpit and I hollered out, "Jap!" I remember, "Jap!" (laughs). So, by the time I got my guns on him, I got a B-29 in my site. So, he goes down and goes right vertically up makes a loop and comes down and "Tail End Charlie". He's the guy filling in the diamond of the last flight. I could see spent cases coming out of his guns because they come out into the air stream. That was one of the few turrets where they come out into the air stream.

I said to Tony Ragolli (sp??) our right gunner, "Didn't you see him?" He said, "No, I didn't see him." The only guy I see shooting in that whole formation was that guy the "Tail End Charlie" on the end. Finally, the other gunners on our ship we believe he was asleep. He could sleep standing up. He was one of those guys. I remember one reunion, we were talking about that and we asked him flat out, "We're you asleep?" and he said, "Yes." Here a guy could be jeopardizing ten other guys plus the airplane, right? That's the last thing you want a guy to do is sleep when he is in combat. So, anyway, got through that.

Our first mission was (unclear) a high, high altitude job and that's the one we dropped the bowling ball. Dendy threw the bowling ball out.

Q: Tell us about that will you.

A: Well, there was a Chief Petty Officer in the 67th Seabees that brought a regulation bowling ball from the states. I don't know what he thought he was going to do with a bowling ball on Tinian but he probably didn't want to give it away so he figured (unclear).

So, anyway, he brought this ball up. He brought the ball to Dendy and asked Dendy, "Look I'm going to paint this ball up like a billiard number "8" ball", an "8" ball in a billiard rack. It's black and got a big white spot on it and a big "8" right in that white background. He said, "Will you deposit it over Japan?" He said. "Sure. Give me that ball and I'll drop it."

(unclear). High Altitude. Of course, we are depressurized at high altitude and everybody's on oxygen, right? When they get ready to release the bombs, Dendy gets up out of his seat and goes back to the navigator's compartment and radio operator. They sit in the back and right there is the bulkhead which opens up into the bomb bays. The doors came open and the bombardier

triggered those shackles. The bombs went down and he threw the ball out with it. I could imagine what that must have hit. They got quite an article in the *Island Change* on that. They said that was their secret weapon and that the Japs are startled and confused because they were looking for the other seven (laughs).

Q: Could you hold that up. That was your squadron newspaper.

A: It's the *Island Change*. *Island Change* that they put out weekly I think it is. Reporters would go seek out information for this. It's on the back page if anybody would like to read it. It's got a column on the back there that talks about it.

Q: About the bowling ball.

A: Yes. About the bowling ball.

Q: You had other missions beside that, of course. How many missions did you make? (unclear)

A: Thirty three.

Q: Thirty three over Japan.

A: Yes. That include the Iwo. Let me say why we got thirty three. The rest of the crew except the gunners had thirty five. That was a tour – thirty five. When we went to low level with incendiaries, they dropped off two gunners because they had no –LeMay had come out and said there are not going to be any guns on board. That's his first order –no gun, period. The next mission though, he said we'll put the tail guns in but we're only going to give 100 rounds per gun.

Q: This is General Curtis LeMay who commanded (unclear)

A: Major General stationed at headquarters on Guam in command of the 21st Bomber Command, 20th Air Force.

Those pilots were really up in arms. His staff told him you are going to lose 75% of your force on that first strike.

Well let me get into the high altitude first and then get into that. We flew high altitude but the problem was we never had too much success. They called it precision but it was far from precision. We'd go up there anywhere from twenty five to thirty thousand feet. The winds we found and the cloud coverage was thick, heavy and the winds up there were anything from 150-160 miles per hour.

What they found out that later became known to us now as the jet stream. They thought it was a coincidence that in a couple of days it would get back to normal but it never did. It never did. The results were lousy. There'd be a lot of smoke and debris and dust down there and we thought

we did a great job. When the photos shots went up the next day to take photos, they found the roofs on the factories and everything else- cars in the parking lots. After a while, it got very frustrating on Arnold. He was getting disgusted.

Q: Hap Arnold?

A: Pardon?

Q: Hap Arnold?

A: Hap Arnold. That was a unique air force – the 20th. The 20th got their orders from the Joint Chiefs of Staff. No theater commander had authority over that air force. None. Normally, the theater commanders take charge of the air force assigned to the theater like MacArthur, Stilwell, Eisenhower.

Arnold was smart. He figured if they all wanted it. They all put their bid in to get those B-29's. The Navy, MacArthur, Stilwell. The Navy wanted them for long range reconnaissance. Arnold said to the Navy look they're misusing the bomber. This thing is supposed to go 4000 miles and carry 10 tons and go 35,000 feet high and here we are some want to use it for reconnaissance. No way.

So, he talked Marshal into getting this B-29 force, 20th Air Force, assigned to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Joint Chiefs of Staff put Hap Arnold as the CEO just like a corporation. He would do the day to day operations but the Joint Chiefs when it came to the atomic bombs, they made the choices.

LeMay figured if he didn't do something drastic pretty soon, he was going to lose his job. He got in touch with Eaker over at the 8th Air Force and he wanted to know information on how the British were doing with their incendiaries.

The British did their attacks at night with incendiary bombs. The Americans did theirs in daylight with high precision but they got a beating. They took a beating early on.

Anyway, they decided that he was going to take a shot at it from low level anywhere from 5,000 to 10,000 feet where the winds were anywhere from 10 to 30 miles per hour. He was going to use incendiary bombs and they were going to use the M69 which was meant just for Japan – the type of buildings you know.

They had this architect from New York City who lived in Japan for 18 years and he was familiar with the type of construction.

So, what the Americans did they imported from the Far East these materials and they built out in the Dugway Proving Grounds in Utah, they built a village to test this M69 bomb. It proved to be highly successful. So, they put that into the arsenal – the M69 and the M47 which was the Napalm. They weighed about a little less than 100 pounds. The M69 was just a little bit over 6

pounds but what they did was to put that in what they called a 500 pound cluster. The bomb actually had a tail like on a kite – just a three foot streamer rag. The casing was 3 inches in diameter and 20 inches long and they packed those into this cluster bomb. It was sealed by wire bands and when it got to a certain altitude, the explosives would break the bands and they would scatter maybe 2,500 feet something like that above the ground.

The M47's though they would band them in three wide and three deep – that's nine in a cluster. One of those would go up on a shackle, that cluster of nine, and that band would break. They were a little bit heavier so therefore they could penetrate better. They used those. The pathfinders used those to light up the target area. I'll tell you a little bit about that. Anyway, that was our bomb load. That was what he was going to use.

So, on March 9th, that's when it all began. He put up over three hundred B-29's and we're going on Tokyo. General Powers went up there to observe. He as commanding general of the 314th Wing on Guam. He went up there and he was going to observe the results of this thing.

They went in anywhere from 5,000 and the pilots and crews...one guy even wrote his obituary out and took it over to the chaplain. His pilot said "Why are you doing it?" He said "What are you writing?" He said, "I'm writing my obituary and I want the chaplain to see that it gets delivered because I don't think I am going to survive this thing." They thought he was crazy, this LeMay, but they all went.

Before this low level stuff, the morale of the force was getting pretty low. The results were bad. We're going up there risking our lives and no results.

Anyway, they go up and it was successful. That night there were high winds down on the ground. When they unloaded those bombs and started fires very nearly 15 or 16 square miles of Tokyo burned that night. It continued from there on cities one by one.

We went in one night there on May 25th over Tokyo. We got in there dropped our bombs and somebody yelled, I think it was the Central Fire Control guy, that there was a "29" right above us. I looked around and there he was. The glow of the fire was shining off his aluminum skin. There he was. I don't think that guy was 100 feet above us and he had his bomb bay doors open. The question was did he release his bombs or were they still in the racks? I know this. The first thing you do when the last bombs clear that bomb bay is to close those doors. That's just like putting full flaps on an airplane. You can't maneuver. Anyway, we yelled and Woods, he was then our pilot, Capt. Woods, he made a sharp bank to the right and got out of there. But the question is that's the risk. He was in smoke and debris. It was risky.

One thing that was very strictly adhered to and they told us over and over again – you had to maintain your assigned altitude and timing. If you were assigned – each squadron was stacked 200 feet up. There would be 200 feet between for instance if we went in at 5,000 – the 482nd –

the 483rd would then be at 5,200 feet. The 484th would be at 5,400 feet. That's what they did. The groups were about 3,000 different at least in one article that I saw.

You had to maintain your altitude and timing because there were going to be other planes coming in and occupy that same space later on. The thing of it was though if you got those hot spots down there where explosions and there were some areas where it was just like a forge white hot like that. If you get into that smoke and debris that was coming up in your altitude, it was a rough ride. It wasn't unusual for those updrafts to send you up four or five hundred, six hundred feet like that. Now you're in somebody else's airspace, right? And you can't see them. That's the risk that was involved.

Q: You made thirty three of these missions including Iwo Jima.

A: I did about thirteen on the fire bombing raids. Then there was the mining missions.

Q: You dropped mines in enemy waters.

A: Yes. What they did – Admiral Nimitz wanted to get the air force involved, the 20th Air Force to mine the inland sea. It was called *Operation Starvation*. LeMay, he resisted it once for a time and so did Arnold but the thing is that LeMay was running out of incendiary bombs. He put an order in for 36,000 more tons. The Navy told him that they were on the docks but it would take them two weeks to deliver. So, he said ok I might as well just go and mine.

So, they went to mining and used two types of mines- a thousand and a two thousand. Are we running out?

Q: We're good. Keep going.

A: One thousand and two thousand pounds mine. They were going to mine the inland sea. The vital part of that inland sea was the Shimonoseki Strait. That was a small narrow body of water that separated Kyushu from Honshu. That was the outlet out of the inland sea where their (unclear) Navy base that was the Japanese navy base also their transport ships to supply their forces on China, Korea and also to bring back exports. They import foodstuffs to Japan would be impounded. The 3rd Fleet was operating up there so they were practically sealed off.

So, they were using that Shimonoseki Strait. There was another strait that opened up into the Pacific Ocean – the Bungo Strait. That separated Kyushu from Shikoku Island which is north of Kyushu and we mined that one.

There were two types that we mostly used – magnetic and acoustic. They has sensors on them. They called them the magnetic sensor and the other one. Any waters that was up to 15 fathoms deep, they used a 1,000 pound mine. But the one that was over up to 25 fathoms, they used the 2,000 pounds. The magnetic mines the sensors would pick up the steel hull. The acoustic ones

were the ones where the propellers and the turbulence created by the propeller would trigger that one.

There were a couple other types of bombs. They called it the ship count. What that would do, they would set it for maybe every fifth ship that went over, it would go off. What they were trying to do was to confuse the Japs so that the Japs wouldn't be able to go in there and detect where they are. So, they were dormant down there on the bottom and every fifth ship that went over or it could be the third ship that would go off. They thought they had the area cleared and they didn't.

Then there was one with a delay on it which would maybe go a week before it would activate or something like that. Later on in the war, when we were up there and knew that our ships would have to go in there to supply the prisoners of war and also to bring in the occupation force, they had mines that they put there which would inactivate after a certain period of time like shelf life like a piece of grocery.

Q: How long did it take you to fly from Tinian to target and back?

A: The average mission was about 14 hours. It was about 7 hours up and 7 hours back.

Q: You were right over the Pacific. I know that you have a map that was issued to you. Can you show the camera please?

A: This was if we had to ditch or parachute out and landed into the sea. This was given to us. ok. It has the water of Japan. It has the islands of Japan. (unfolds big map)

Q: It's upside down

A: That's China there.

Q: I understand that they were printed on fabric so that if they got wet they were still usable.

A: Yes. That's right.

Q: You also have a mirror there.

A: This mirror here. This was given to us if we were in a life raft and you see an air craft above what you do is hold it up to the sun and you site right into that crossing in there. (handles mirror). That's supposed to reflect and the airplane will hopefully see the glare and will suspect something down there and they may go down and investigate.

Q: You did have ships in your force that didn't make it?

A: Oh yes.

Q: How many casualties did you say you had in your unit?

A: I think it's on that plaque there.

Q: Hold that up there.

A: This is a plaque of the 505th that's on Tinian. It's a much larger plaque that's over there. It's bronze. This is the miniature one. Ok?

Q: You got that Nick?

A: It says here. It talks in here. Let's see (reads plaque). Nope. I thought it did give the casualties here. The number 187 sounds familiar to me. I wouldn't put my hand on the Bible with that though. But this talks about in the mining operation LeMay assigned that entire mining operation it was called *Operation Starvation*. LeMay assigned that to the 313th Wing. Jim Davies. That's your baby. You plan it. You execute it. The 313th had four groups. He assigned each group one month. The month of June, our group the 505th, took over the entire mining. We put 6,200 combat hours in that operation.

Then we went from there - Admiral Nimitz wanted us to do something to help knock out some of these kamikaze bases on Kyushu along with the fighter bases. If you remember when the fleet was down there supporting the landings on Okinawa, they were getting creamed by these kamikazes. In fact, the kamikaze hit the *Indianapolis* while she was down there supporting and also the carrier *Franklin*. In fact, we went over the *Franklin* when she was being towed over to Hawaii back to the states. She was smoking, burning then.

Q: You also mentioned to me at one point you had to land at Iwo Jima. You had to make a landing. Could you tell us a little about that?

A: Yes. That was the last mission and nearly collided nearly had a mid-air collision. We were trying to get into that formation. It was high altitude. There was a lot of groups involved. There was about three wings I guess: the 313th, the 73rd from Saipan and the 314th from Guam. That put hundreds of them up there and what you do, you get into a big circle. You get your position. We were trying to get into our position and Cahill was trying to get into his and he was coming in just like that (motions with hands). All of the sudden, Cahill saw us and our pilot saw it and they separated like that. I was scared to death. The last mission.

Q: Last mission.

A: That's when we ran out of fuel and we landed on Iwo. They filled us up and then we got a bent prop. Then we had to turn around and come back get that.

Q: You mentioned that you had seen the *Enola Gay*, the B-29 that dropped the Atom Bomb. Can you tell us a little about that? Explain to us how it was at the end of the war (unclear)

A: They came over there. We didn't know anything what they were doing. We saw these pits being dug right across from the control tower. I saw this big....us gunners went down to the

flight line about every day. We saw this thing on a skid – a pallet like. It was huge. It was all yellow. I never saw a bomb like it before in my life. It was fat. It come out to be *Fat Man*. I didn't see *Little Boy*.

What they would do the day of the mission, they'd take the Atomic Bomb what they did they got them ready in a temperature controlled building. They came down and moved them down to where this loading pit was. They put the bomb down in the bottom of the pit. Down in the bottom of the pit was the hoist - a jack like. I don't know if it was run by electric or it was air. They would put the bomb there and bring the ship over the pit and they'd raise it up into the ship.

I remember they called us the day it was dropped on Hiroshima. They called us into the briefing room and told us that the *Enola Gay* from the 509th had just dropped a new bomb that was supposed to be the most powerful bomb that the world has ever known and that would destroy a complete city. That's all that was said.

That was on the 6th of August. The 9th, Sweeney went up and took *Fat (Man)* up and they did the same thing. They loaded it from the pit. Of course, his pit had to be a little bit bigger. They raised it up in the ship and he took off. His first primary target was Kyoto but that was socked in. He was given orders not to drop by radar. It had to be a visual drop. So, he hung around. Besides that, one of the planes was not there with them. They usually went up with two or three planes with weather instruments and that kind of thing to measure the vibrations and concussions, heat and all of this.

Finally he had a go. His fuel now became a critical point. So, he went down to a secondary which was Nagasaki. That was socked in too. He was going to drop by radar. He was going to disobey orders not to drop. He didn't come all this way just to take the bomb back. Just as he was getting ready to do the radar drop, the bombardier said he could see it. There was a break in the clouds and he dropped but he was off target by a couple of miles but it still did an awful job.

Q: After the second bomb dropped did it become pretty clear that the war was going to come to an end? Do you remember how that announcement was made? How you felt?

A: No. LeMay kept sending them up there.

Q: Missions were flown even after the two bombs were dropped?

A: Yes. Yes. Especially the 315th Wing. They had airplanes similar to the 506th, the 509th rather – the composite group. They had no turrets on their ship at all. The skin was clean except the tail. One thing they did hit. They had the latest technology radar that was made and that was called the *Eagle*.

Their primary job was to take out the oil industry up there – the refineries, the storage tanks, the distribution centers and all of that. They would go at night.

Q: Do you remember when the war actually came to an end how you felt?

A: I was in San Francisco. I left the island of Tinian on August 12th. That was funny. I went back on a C-54 and that was a 509th plane too. That's why they called it a composite. It was a C-54 and the name of it was *Green Hornet*.

We flew there. We got into Johnson Island, fueled up and went into Hawaii. We had an officer on board and he said do you boys want to go through right on through to the States and we said sure. So he said give me your papers and he said I'll take care of the papers and you go on up to the mess hall and get your meal and meet me on the flight line and we are going right to the states.

We get up there and bingo, there's guys who'd been there a couple of weeks and they were mad. Oh, were they mad. We get back to the states and we're in San Francisco. I was in a movie theater when they announced that the Japanese had surrendered. The lights came on in the theater and they announced that that Japanese had surrendered. Everybody exited the theater. All the emergency exits would be open and leave the theater.

I go out and it was just one wall of humanity from one sidewalk right over to the other sidewalk. I remember there was purple and a statue there and I see Navy personnel because San Francisco was Navy and they were up there. I actually saw those street cars. I saw all kinds of services take that and got onto that street car and lifted it right off the track. There was Navy. There was Army. There were Marines and I couldn't believe it. They took that trolley car right off the track and set it off to the side. That there was where I spent my day of surrender in San Francisco.

Q: So, out of the service, what did you do for a career after that?

A: I did some odd jobs right after I got out. I got out in 1945 on November 14th. I eventually wound up with IBM and worked for them for 35 years.

Q: You mentioned that you go back to reunions from time to time.

A: About every year. Last year, I was out in Missoula. Missoula, Montana. Then I went over to the Air Force Academy for the 67th. I usually go to theirs. I'll tell you now. You people here in Kingston are going to see a reunion this September on the 7th to the 11th.

I met, out there in Missoula, the survivors of the Bataan Death March and Corregidor. You have a guy here from Kingston and he's hosting that group here in Kingston this fall. They're staying at the Ramada Inn. He's putting the programs together. I think he told me they're going to have West Point. One (unclear) in Kingston is going to give them a barbeque. He was trying to work out some sort of arrangement with Steinbrenner but there was no deal really closed on that one yet. So, that's pretty much it.

Q: Could you tell us your feelings about how your experiences in the military affected your life and how you feel about it today?

A: Well, I've been a military man what I mean is that I have been an ally of the military. I'll tell you that right now.

I remember when I was still working for IBM, I got a call one Friday. I believe it was Friday. I got a call from a student from Lehigh University. I think its Pennsylvania. He said that his class was taking a survey and trying to find out people who participated in those fire bombings raids where millions and millions of civilians were killed. That's true. He wanted to know if I had any regrets.

So, I thought about it and said how did you get my name? He said we were searching through and got with the government and found out what groups participated and we came up with your name. I'm sure many many others too.

He asked me if I had any regrets. I said, "No." He said, "Why? You killed a lot of women and children." I said yes but when I think about it, I think about what they did over there in Pearl Harbor. I think about the Rape of Nanking. I think about the way they treated our Prisoners of War. They started that thing and I have no regrets.