Helen (Clinebell) Penny and Lee Penney
Narrators

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Interviewer

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TM: You were both in the service together. Can you both talk a little about where you are from and some background of what you did before the war? And since ladies are always before gentlemen, let's begin with you Helen.
HP: I was born in Peoria County, Illinois believe it or not in a farm house. When I was about five my folks moved to McLean County, Illinois which was not too far away. McLean County was a wonderful agricultural area, it is now the home of State Farm Insurance Company. There were many cornfields and the soil was two to three feet of black loam which was good unless there was a drought or chinch bugs. My background is somewhat agricultural although I did not always live on a farm.

TM: What was your family name?
HP: My maiden name was Clinebell C L I N E B E L. That is of interest because way back when in the late seventeen hundreds and early eighteen hundreds my people were in the Lancaster, Pennsylvania area until about 1848 or so they went West to Illinois and Iowa. Growing up in Illinois I had no idea I would end up out here in New York State.

TM: What were you doing right before you went into the service?
HP: I had gone to school at the University of Illinois. I was a graduate of the College of Commerce and Business Administration. I was working in the advertising department of the Caterpillar Tractor Company whose headquarters were in Peoria, IL. I was writing captions for a photo library, many of the photos were sent to trade magazines to inform people or advertising for Caterpillar. I heard on the radio that they needed people to serve in the various Army hospitals. I thought, well I have learned about all I'm going to learn at the moment in this advertising department even though I loved those people. Maybe I could do something truly useful for my country. I went, and they took me. They gave me a lot of tests and said, yes I could stay in the medical part-they would train me.

TM: How long was it after the war had started that you began doing that job?
HP: I did not try to join until February of 1945, by then they had need of specialized people for a short time.
GP: And that was after we had met. [George tenderly touches his wife on her shoulder]
HP: Yes.

TM: We'll get to that. Let's go to Lee to fill us in about what you were doing before you entered the service and your basic training before we get into the war years.
GP: My name is actually George Lee Roy. I tell people I was named for George the Fifth, the King of England at the time I was born. [All laugh]. I was born in Oak Park, Illinois which is

really a part of suburban Chicago. I was reared by an Uncle and Aunt in Peoria, Illinois. I was at Bradley University and working between terms for Caterpillar Tractor at the time of Pearl Harbor. I started back to school but was drafted before I could complete another semester.
TM: How did you feel about being drafted?
GP: I fully expected to be and thought it was the thing to do. I might have enlisted, but thought I was going to be drafted anyway so I would wait it out. I was drafted at Peoria and reported to Biloxi, Mississippi for training. After a battery of tests at my induction center they sent to Biloxi assigned to the United States Air Force. There I received my basic training, and passed all my tests when I was interviewed for my assignment they asked me what I wanted to do, I said I don't really care. The fellow said, maybe you would make a good power turret mechanic. I thought, well okay.

TM: Do you suppose he mentioned that job because there was a need for it, or was he just pulling something out of a hat?
GP: I think he felt I was qualified for it even though I did not know what that was. [Laughs]. After basic training I was sent to Lowry Air Force Base in Denver, Colorado and trained to maintain the power turrets that held the guns that moved around to be aimed at the enemy aircraft.

TM: What planes were you trained to work on?
GP: At that time it was B-17s and B-24s. Interestingly enough, the gun sights had, what we call rudimentary now, were actually computers-electro-mechanical computers unlike the electronics we have today. So they computed the lead that otherwise the gunner would have had to compute by hand and controlled the movement of the guns in relation to the gun sight that the gunner manipulated.

TM: So was that on the earlier bombers like the B-17s and B-24 air crafts?
GP: Yes, at the same time there was a very elaborate device, the Norden bomb sight. These gun sight computers were similar in principal to the Norden bomb sight.

TM: Yes, you may have known that the Norden bomb sight, was manufactured right here in Elmira, New York at the old Remington-Rand plant on South Main Street, some of which is still standing. It turned to war industries and that was a very top-secret manufacturing process. From what I have been told, that location was were the bombsight was put together.
GP: I did not know that, but it does not surprise me. IBM also manufactured some of the equipment, especially on the B-29s that I served on.

TM: After you completed your training for the maintenance of the power turrets, when did you actual go out and put this training to work?
GP: That is an interesting story. After completing my training a Lowry Air Base, I was sent to Rome, New York. A group was forming to go over to Britain and I was to be a part of that group. In the meantime, they had us doing odd jobs in the warehouses.

TM: What year would this have been?
GP: It was 1943. They used to line a whole bunch of us up in the morning and assign us various duties. One rainy morning I asked the fellow next to me, what is that group down there going to do? He said, they are going to take tests. I thought, well that is kind of a nice thing to do on a rainy morning so I went and got into that line. It ended up that I qualified to go to specialized training on college campuses, the Army's specialized training program. I

spent nine months on college campuses and received thirty-one semester hours credit while I was in the service.

TM: What was this training to lead to as far as the Army was concerned? To make you and officer gentlemen possibly? [Laughs]
GP: Who knows, I'm not quite sure on that. It was called general engineering so I presumed they had some plan for future possibilities if required. It was just basically, college work.

TM: What college was that?
GP: The first six months I spent at Syracuse University and we ate at the Syracuse University Dining Hall and lived in fraternity houses on Piety Hill. On Saturdays we would sit in and snicker at the R.O.T.C. (Reserve Officers' Training Corp.) candidates as they marched on Saturdays and we did not have to. [Laughs] After six months at Syracuse, for some reason they transferred me from there to the University of Illinois. And that was a lucky break because that is where I met my wife. She was going to school at the University of Illinois.

TM: Maybe we can move right into that interesting aspect of things. First, I just have a question. Do you believe there was ever any resentment on the part of young men who, like yourself, were in the middle of college when they got drafted and found themselves at a low rank being ordered around by young men who did not seem as bright as yourself? Did you ever detect any of that?
GP: I would not say there was any resentment. We used to kind of snicker at these ninety-day wonders that received ninety days of training at West Point and were then Second Lieutenants. We laughed because they did not know what was going on.

TM: How did one identify a ninety-day wonder? They certainly did not come in advertising themselves as such.
GP: They had the Second Lieutenant insignia on their uniform.

TM: This very interesting and curious route that you are taking through the military is taking you back to Illinois, (town unclear @13:33) near Champaign and that is where you met Helen.
GP: Yes, that is where my home was and I was real happy about that.

TM: Why don't the two you tell us about how you met and what happened after that?
GP: Our meeting was kind of interesting wasn't it? [both laugh]
HP: I was a voluntary U.S.O. Hostess (United Service Organization) I was trained at the Y.W.C.A. (Young Women's Christian Association). One of things we were asked to do was to go to the dances.
So I rode the bus to Urbana and danced with anybody who asked me.
GP: I was at the dance, but I did not meet her at the dance.

TM: You were not yet in the service?
HP: No, I was attending college, I was a senior.
GP: It seems we got on the same bus to go back to our quarters. You were in the co-op house and I was in the fraternity house. This attractive young lady was seated just next to where I was standing since there was standing room only on the bus. I looked at one of the advertising posters and made some comment to the fellow standing next to me about the ad which I supposed was a jewelry store I knew. And you piped up and said....
GP: I think I said that store had been burned down.

HP: So we got acquainted, and when she got off the bus, I got off the bus. [Laughs] Even though I was still a block or two from my bus stop. It ended up we made a date for the next Tuesday night.
He used to take me out on Tuesday evenings for spaghetti we went down to Casteedez (@15:45 spelling) which was a Greek restaurant. We would either ride the bus or walk but he had to be back by seven.
GP: Except on Tuesdays and Thursday, I had another hour or so. So we arranged to be together on those nights.

TM: One thing I was curious about, on both college campuses you lived in fraternity houses. Were they disbanded during the war years? There was a shortage of Greeks as they used to say.
GP: Almost all of the prior occupants had been drafted so they were in the service too. There was space available.

TM: How long were you together at the University of Illinois?
HP: From about September through December. We were engaged that December and he was shipped off in January, I don't remember where he went.
GP: Yes, that was all of a sudden, for some reason they disbanded the AST Program at that time. Some of the people were told in advance, but I was not. The first I knew about it was when we got back from one of our dates and they said, well you are shipping out in the morning.

TM: And when was this, January of 1944?
GP: Yes. I called her on the telephone, it was the only notice I could give her that I was on my way – but did not know where.

TM: So you had been together how long?
HP: About three months.

TM: Why don't we continue with your story George (Lee) since you are shipping out? Where did the Army, in its wisdom, send you?
GP: The Army, in its wisdom if you will, sent me up to Madison, Wisconsin to go to radio school. When I arrived, after a little while, they found out I was already trained on power turrets. So they were not going to enroll me into radio school, they sent me out to the replacement depot in Lincoln, Nebraska.

TM: Do you mean to replace men in other units?
GP: Right. From there they assigned me to Tucson, Arizona to work on power turrets on the B-24s and B-17s.

TM: What was the status of the planes you were working on were they new or were they damaged planes that had returned from the war?
GP: They were new, being prepared to go overseas, I did not know when, but we were preparing them to go overseas.

TM: What was the nature of your work did you install the turrets?
GP: What I had to do when they came back from a flight was to get aboard and check out that everything was working properly. If not, I would remove that particular unit and have a

vehicle take it to the service area for repair – though that was fairly unusual. I never got much experience in that line because very shortly they asked for volunteers to go overseas. I thought, well I'm the last man into this outfit and I'm going whether I volunteer or not so I volunteered. By doing so that took me into a forming B-29 group in McCook, Nebraska so it was a little while yet before I got overseas.[Laughs]

TM: So that would have been a new plane for you?
GP: It was a new plane and I had to be trained again. I was shipped back and forth across the country a time or two for various training on the gun fire equipment on the B-29s.

TM: Did you repair any of the gun systems in these turrets or was is simply the mechanical part of the moving of the turret around with the gunnery part being somebody else's responsibility?
GP: Some of each. My first training was specifically for the mechanical parts and all which that entails. Then a few of us received additional training on the computers that were associated with this gunfire equipment so I was a specialist within a specialty actually. My primary responsibility was for the computer systems although at times if necessary, it was the entire system.

TM: Could you possibly describe what this computer system looked like and maybe to an extent how it worked? I think a lot of people, when they watch/listen to this someday, are going to be surprised there were computers on these planes. We always think computers are a recent thing, but they do go back to that time.
GP: Yes, and even before the B-29s computers were on the B-17s and B-24s. The difference between the B-17s and the B-24s was that input and output to and from the computers were all mechanical. It was rotating cables. When the sight was turned a cable connecting to the computer put in that information. When the guns were elevated, the same thing occurred. On the B-29s the input was all electrical. As a matter of fact, it was four hundred cycles alternating current. The position of the turrets, there were rheostats connected with the gun sights, and the signals then controlled the computers and the computers did the necessary calculations for the final positioning of the guns.

TM: So were the guns moved automatically to the target? How did that computer assist the man who was there with the gun?
GP: The guns were rotated by an electric motor on their particular mounts. The electric motors were controlled by the computers. The input to the computers was the gun sights that the gunners used as well as a hand set of the navigator who put in certain information such as altitude and air speed. Another interesting thing about that system was that a given gun sight might be able to control more than one set of guns depending on how the gunner operated the switch. At times, the navigator looking out of the little bubble on the top could take control of the forward, aft, and upper guns.

TM: Was this something he had to do by voice communication, to let them know he was going to do this?
GP: No, he had priority there, he would just flip a hand switch and took control. Now, of course, before he did that, he would communicate over the audio system that he was going to do that. If one of the gunners, heaven forbid, were unconscious, naturally he would not have to consult, but just go ahead and do that. That was the advantage, should one person be disabled some of the other gunners could take control.

TM: Probably one of the most enjoyable movies about bombers in World War II, as far as I'm concerned, was the one with Gregory Peck – Twelve O'clock High- I don't know if you ever saw that one? It was a black and white one made in the early 1950's, it's pretty good.
GP: I think all I saw of that one was the previews of the coming attractions. [All laugh]

TM: I remember going to see that movie with my father when I was small kid, it made an impression on me. It certainly shows you what it was like to be in a B-17 or a B-24, there was a man for each gun. You were in the turret or a waist gunner aiming your guns.
GP: The waist guns in particular were completely physical, there was no computer associated with them at all.

TM: Now that was something which never came across in a movie like that, to have a system like you are describing to help the gunners in the ball turrets, or is that something else?
GP: On the B-17s there were both the waist gunner with the strictly mechanical system and down in the ball turret was a gunner with his knees up to his chin who was looking through a gun sight and connected to it was a specialized mechanical computer to do some of that maneuvering for him.

TM: The reason I asked that question was because on the B-29 was there a man for each gun?
GP: There were five gunnery positions and a man could control more than one gun. The only gunner who was physically near his guns was the tail gun. The others were all remote controlled.

TM: Let's say the top turret for the guns were covering the upper part of the plane, where was the gunner in that plane and what was he looking at?
GP: On the top, there were actually two turrets a forward and an aft. The gunner was in a pressurized compartment looking out the top, along with the navigator and two other gunners who were looking out blisters (windows) on the sides. The fellow looking out the top could control the forward and aft guns. For example, if there was no target in the direction the plane was flying, he could aim at a target behind the plane, or if a target were in front, the navigator could flip the switch and he would be in control of both gun turrets.

TM: Sorry to pick your brain for all this technical stuff. I think there are people who might find it interesting.
GP: I find it interesting to recall it.
HP: Some of this I have not heard.

TM: So you were in McCook, Nebraska and you were to be a replacement. Where did they send you?
In due time, they sent us over to the Pacific-Asiatic Theater. The Mariana Islands, and in my case, on Tinian, which just happened to be the island from which the atom bomb was dispatched.

TM: When did you arrive in Tinian, which was your only assignment?
GP: As far as the war effort was concerned, that was my real service. I arrived early February in 1945 and the day I arrived, looking out across the ocean as far as the eye could see, were ships getting ready to invade Iwo Jima.

TM: That was a time of very intense bombing of Japan, so you guys must have been pretty busy.
GP: Yes, most of the service people had been shipped there by ocean vessel. I was fortunate enough to have arrived by airplane. I wasn't there a day before we became quite active by maintaining the equipment. The planes would go out early in the evening and come back late the next morning. This kept up day after day.

TM: Right, we aren't here to tell the history of the war, but anyone who knows about that period of the war knows that the cities of Japan were really being pounded in those months.
GP: Yes, the aerial photos were posted on our bulletin board every morning. We were quite aware that Japan had been almost completely destroyed by the fighter bombs.

TM: Supposedly as many people or more had died in Tokyo from the fire bomb raids as did from the atomic bomb blast.
GP: Probably quite a number more.

TM: How many hours did you guys put in maintaining these planes?
GP: We would work as long as necessary. People with specialties like I had, it was not really as time consuming. Now for the people who had to maintain the engine equipment, and that type of thing, they worked around the clock. In my particular specialty, there was a crew of three of us for some thirteen aircraft and it would be just a matter of several hours after the planes arrived that we would have them all checked out and ready to go again.

TM: Did it seem that there were many planes that came back having suffered damage during these raids?
GP: Fortunately, the Japanese were not able to put up much opposition by way of aircraft. Anti-aircraft fire was another thing, and occasionally we had a ship come back in rather bad shape. One time we had a plane in such bad shape that it had to be hauled away to be scrapped. Fortunately, the crew all survived without being wounded. Now on one mission, there was fighter interception in a fairly heavy amount. One of our gunners downed two enemy aircraft. He was sent back to the States as a gunnery instructor. [Everyone laughs]

TM: He never allowed as though there might have been an element of luck in his gunnery, or just that he was a crack shot…the Army didn't care.
GP: Well, we thought the computers had worked quite well!

TM: Well Helen, Lee has gone off to all these far places in the United States and finally to Tinian. What was happening to you? You were still a student and helping out in the U.S.O.
HP: I finished my work in college, I received a Bachelor of Science degree with a Major in Marketing. I worked in the advertising department at Caterpillar Tractor. I enjoyed the people there what I was doing but did not feel I was going to learn a whole lot more. When the radio said they were going to need people to work in the hospitals, I went down to inquire. They gave me a battery of tests like they had given him a battery of tests. I spent a month in Basic Training in (@0:34:53 unclear) which is near Chattanooga and six weeks in medical/surgical training. I thought our training was excellent. Having come from a college background I figured they made mistakes, if there were any, on the people that went through before us. When we finished that, we had our choice as to where we would like to serve. I think there were at least seven or eight different hospitals I could have chosen to go to I happened to choose Battle Creek, Michigan which was the Percy Jones Hospital. It was mainly an amputee

center, but we did have other kinds of patients there too. I worked a short time on the paraplegic ward and was glad I was not assigned there permanently because those poor people, while their attitude was good, it was very difficult for them.

TM: Were you working as a nurse?
HP: I was assisting doctors and nurses with whatever needed to be done. Sometimes I changed the sheets on beds, sometimes I gave back rubs, sometimes I was lucky enough to push the juice cart around and visit with people.

TM: You were not in the operating room?
HP: No, I never had to serve in the operating room, although I was trained so I could have if they needed me. Planes were coming in carrying people who only had first aid on the battlefields and we would meet them. They were loaded on the plane and sent to our hospital, we would help unload them and took care of them from there.

TM: That is interesting, if you think about things today if someone gets wounded in the Middle East they seem to head to (unclear @0:36:33) spot in Germany where we have a hospital. We did not have a hospitals then, we had to bring them home right?
HP: Yes, there were many good-sized hospitals here in the United States. We met them, unloaded them, which we had enough people so it was not a fatiguing job. I did enjoy my experience, we had very fine doctors and nurses to work with. They knew they could not have done the job without us. I did empty bedpans and I gave back rubs, whatever the doctors and nurses assigned us to do. I worked on that for quite a while and then as the patients got better, the were assigned to move out to Fort Custer which was only a few miles away from there, but it was a little different type hospital. I was out there on the wards for a little while too.

Finally, one of the lady Sergeants said "We need a company clerk, would you like to be a company clerk?" I said "I don't know, I don't have any idea what a company clerk does and I'm enjoying what I am doing". She replied "Well, it would mean you would be in a room with two others instead of being out in the big barracks." The barracks were comfortable but, that was an incentive so I said yes and that is how I ended up there. I had had three ratings even though I was in less than a year. I was a private when I first when in, then I was a T-5 (Technical rating) after I graduated from Medical/Surgical school, and then when I became company clerk I became a Corporal which is in the leadership rather than a technical part. Not that I was any hot-shot or anything, I just did what was needed to be done at the time. [All laugh]

TM: It sounded like you were pretty good at what you were doing. What was your final rank?
HP: Just a Corporal,
TM: Well you shouldn't say just a Corporal.
HP: Right, that is a good ranking for leadership skills. If I stayed in longer, I am sure I could have gone off to school but I felt it was more important that I be married and when he got back we got married. I had served slightly less than a year, but that was when I was needed. I think that temporary assignments are sometimes very important.

TM: So your service was pretty much all within 1945?
HP: It started in February of 1945 and we were married in January of 1946. Then I had to go back and serve about a week or two after that before I was discharged.

TM: That brings up an interesting question, since you rather hurriedly had to leave with not much of a chance to say goodbye why don't the two of you tell me how you reached the point of how you going to be married in January of 1946?
GP: We had already decided that. [George affectionately grabs Helen's arm, then let's go] She already had a ring by that time.
HP: We had been engaged in December in '43
GP: We both had parents in Peoria, Illinois and we would ride together on the bus back and forth to school. So we were well acquainted enough.

TM: That was before you left so during those three months you did get pretty well acquainted. Why don't you tell me about mail during your military services? Mail is always important to soldiers whether they are WACs (Women's Army Corps) or not.
HP: I wrote to him regularly, but I had no idea where I was to most of the time. You got an APO (Army Post Office) address.

GP: Yes, we were not permitted to say where we were. She never knew.
HP: He did not know about the dropping of the bomb until the next morning. The secrecy was so good.
GP: People in the States knew about it before I did.
HP: They knew there was something unusual because there was a canvas lineup.
GP: That is an interesting story, in my specialty, there were three of us working on these thirteen planes. One of our three had been in the hospital for an appendicitis operation so he was late getting down to the job. When he got there he said to us "you know, the darnedest thing happened when I came by the 509th, they had something they did not want anybody to see. They pulled the bomb trailer in with something all draped in canvas. They pulled the bomb trailer up to one of their ships and stretched canvas from that trailer up to the bomb bay. They loaded something on board that they sure did not want anybody to see". It was the next day that we found out what it was so the secrecy was very good.

TM: So even when Lee was in the United States, did you know where he was?
HP: Yes, I knew where he was then.

TM: But when he was overseas, you only had the APO number.
GP: As a matter of fact, we could call each other on the phone anytime we wanted to when we were in the States.[both laugh]

TM: Once you got to Tinian, how regular was your mail?
GP: We had a daily mail call, and I think delivery was within three or four days
HP: Yes, it was good.

TM: While you were serving in the hospital in Battle Creek, were there any interesting incidents that stick out in your mind?
HP: Not particularly, but the old building we were in used to be the Kellogg Sanitarium and it was a former hotel then owned by the Kellogg cereal company. I don't mean it was fancy, but it was four or five stories high.
GP: Tell him about the thermometer story.
HP: Oh yeah, the morale was fairly good considering these were all young men who had been wounded. We were to take their temperature, and observe their breathing each day to make sure they were okay. One day I took out the thermometer out of a patient's mouth, and it was

a most unusual reading. He began to laugh and said "I put that in ice water, I sure fooled you didn't I!" [Everyone laughs]. I stuck it back in his mouth quick.

TM: I suspect if he wanted to play a trick on you, he must have thought you were special.
HP: Well, it was a treat to get to work with young men like that whose moral for the most part was good. Now there some very serious patients and mostly the nurses and doctors worked with them. But it was good for them to see we cared about our country too.

TM: What were your living conditions on Tinian? Is Tinian an island?
GP: It is an island roughly eight miles by ten miles and a lot of it was tropical vegetation. The airfield, of course, was worked over and was coral rock taken from the island. They broke up the coral and spread it like we would use gravel here. Then they would sprinkle it with salt water and it made a surface as hard as any concrete. Then they put about six or eight inches of asphalt on top of it.

Our living conditions were very good. The earlier troops that were there lived mostly on C-rations which were a packaged meal if you will. By the time I arrived, they had built plywood barracks and we had a regular mess hall. We got a lot of beef from Australia so the conditions were quite good. It was very hot, about 85 degrees all the time. But it was in the trade winds so there was a constant breeze all the time so it was comfortable.

TM: Was there anything to see on the island if you had some free time? Did people fish, swim, or anything like that?
GP: A rather interesting thing occurred to me upon my arrival on the island. I had seen pictures of Japanese soldiers and officers posted before I arrived. After we got there, we were put aboard trucks to our particular quarters. The driver was going to show us what the island looked like and drove down to the southern tip of the island. As we rounded one corner, crunched down in the middle of the street was a Japanese officer as far as I could tell. I thought, "oh my goodness, what have we gotten into here?" It turned out he was one of the laborers on the island and he was just using cast-off clothing. But at the time it looked like I was in the middle of the warfare. That is the only time I saw what we called Tinian Town, when we had that little tour. I did go swimming one time, if you could thumb a ride down on a truck going that way. But I didn't care much for swimming in salt water. Another interesting thing, now that I mention seeing things, the first day I arrived I looked out across the ocean and I saw a B-29 being towed by a tugboat. That is an unusual sight. There were pressurized compartments on all the B-29s and if they happened to get the hatches closed in time, it would float and I saw one being towed.

TM: One that must have been damaged or perhaps made a crash landing?
GP: Or had run out of gas. Occasionally we had planes that ran out of gas. I remember one time a plane had to be towed off the runway because it ran out of gas and just could not go any further.

TM: When the war was going on, did you have a big picture of what was happening?
HP: We did, we were briefed. That was part of our training. I don't if that was part of his or not.
GP: Yes, of course, we were only there a total of nine or ten months.

TM: When you arrived, did it seem the war was won? Was it just a question of getting it over

or was there still doubt?
GP: Oh no, there was still a lot of doubt. We were concerned about the coming invasion of the islands. And that promised to be a real bloody mess because at that time there were still Japanese troops held up on our island.

TM: Oh there were on Tinian.
GP: Oh yes. They actually made one armed raid on one of the camps so we were very much in the war.

TM: That's interesting on an island that wasn't that small. How long had Tinian been regarded as secured by the Army before they began building airstrips and moving planes and troops in?
GP: There was a difference between secure and secure I guess. [laughs] It was considered secure if the danger was at an acceptable level. But the danger was still present there and some Japanese soldiers were probably still there the day I left the island.

TM: So you probably could not have gone off for a little picnic or exploring without some risk of danger.
GP: Actually, we did because we felt secure but there was still that possibility. In wartime, you accept the risks. My greatest risk was the risk of an accident. We had one crew chief walk into a propeller, that type of risk, or a motor vehicle accident which I'm sure probably happened.

TM: Was there much talk among your fellow soldiers on the island about how the war was going and whether invasion would be necessary. I know at the higher levels such as the general staffs were discussing the possibilities. Was that something on the minds of the men?
GP: Mostly we wondered when we could go home. [all laugh] We had no idea when that might be because the Japanese islands had not been invaded. We were informed they had put up considerable resistance. As a matter of fact, we could look along this bluff that rose about the airfield and see places where the flamethrowers had to get the Japanese out of crevices that were hard to believe a man could even fit into.

TM: One thing that seems interesting to me was even though you were in a war zone it is Helen who saw the horrible effects of the war on a human being.
HP: Yes, there were some very seriously wounded patients. None of us were happy about that, but we were doing the best we could with the situation.

TM: Did you ever find out anything about what kind of rehabilitation or care these men would receive after they left your care?
HP: They were getting excellent care at the moment. Those who lost legs were being fitted with prosthesis and were being taught to walk. If they lost an arm or both arms, they received prosthesis and taught how to eat and so forth. Their families could come occasionally to visit them on the weekends. I thought the care they were given was excellent for the time. We had dedicated doctors and nurses and the rest of us were there to help see the situation was as acceptable as possible under the circumstances.

TM: I always wondered about was how men and women who were in these earlier wars coped. It seems, since Vietnam, that the military has become aware that soldiers come back with serious problems. As they ought to having experienced what they have experienced. It doesn't seem there was as much thought given to that at the end of World War II and certainly

not at the end of World War I. Were either you aware of any mustering out counseling or anything that was aimed at helping people readjust to civilian life? Or did you just get your papers to go home, and you went home?
GP: We just got our papers to go home. The difference was that we came home heroes. It was not like the Vietnam conflict where people were insulted when they came home. We were heroes.

TM: And you were greeted that way. You had some confidence when you went to look for a job there may be a smiling face to offer it to you. I want to go back to the episode regarding the atomic bomb which you described very interestingly about the secrecy that surrounded it. What did you hear about it since you were on the island where it originated? Was there any information that would not have been in the newspapers at home?
GP: Yes, on our daily bulletin board there were photos of Tokyo and such things. The atom bomb was carried by the 509th bomb group. We noticed right away when they arrived on Tinian, which was some time after we did, that they were somehow different. Their compound was completely enclosed with a chain link fence and barbed wire. We thought "oh boy, they're an exclusive bunch aren't they!"
And then came the notice on the bulletin board that Colonel Paul Tibbets was awarded an award for carrying a special bomb. It did not say what the bomb was. And we thought, "Oh these are glory boys for sure, they just got here and they are decorated already!" [all laugh] So yes we were informed, but no we weren't.

TM: So how was it that you finally learned about the nature of this weapon? That it was an atomic fission device?
GP: A radio broadcast from the States. The people in the States knew it before we did.

TM: There was not any attempt otherwise?
GP: To brief us ahead of time? Certainly not.
TM: Or even afterward?
GP: No**.** Although afterwards, word of mouth it gets around. We drove around looked at the Enola Gay, the Boxscar and those aircraft.

TM: Well, the secrecy must have continued because they were already thinking about another bomb which eventually did get dropped on Nagasaki. Did that come from the same island?
GP: That was carried by the Boxcar, the second 509th aircraft.

TM: Was there any inkling that there would be another attack such as this? Did the guys talk about it?
GP: We talked about it, but we did not know any more about it than the people in the States knew. We presumed this would be the technique to force the Japanese into surrender so we were pretty happy about it. Before that we had a rumor that the Japanese had contacted the Russians about surrender but nothing more.

TM: So you did hear something about that?
GP: Oh yes, how we learned it, you don't know, it just scuttlebutt with your neighbor.

TM: What do you remember about being in the States and experiencing V-E Day (Victory in Europe) in May of 1945, then V-J Day (Victory over Japan) in August?
HP: I remember on V-E Day we all lined up and had an assembly of some kind and it was

announced to us. Also, before that there was an announcement that our President had died. I was up in the hospital the time at the time of V-J Day so I don't have any particular remembrance. It was just another work day. We were glad it happened though.

TM: You were not part of one of those scenes that is often shown of people in the streets driving around and honking their horns?
HP: No
GP: I think that was primarily V-E Day. I think, even in the States there wasn't a big celebration for V-J Day. That is my opinion. I know on the island, that was the case. V-J Day was just another work day. Whereas on V-E Day there was a big celebration. The anti-aircraft guns were firing and people were “whoop-dee-dooing” and all the rest of that.

TM: Isn't that curious in view of the fact that the latter was going to end the war. We are going to stop here.
GP: Well, that is about it.
HP: That is a good place to stop
GP: I think we're about ready to stop, we have some other commitments. [George touches Helen's shoulder lovingly]

TM: Well, I think we got a lot in.
BOTH: We did