

**Gerald Gersten
Veteran**

**Mike Russert
Wayne Clarke
Interviewers**

**Interviewed on
February 5, 2003, 4:40 PM
Tarrytown, New York**

Q: This is an interview with Gerald Gersten, Hampton Inn, Tarrytown, New York. It is February 5, 2003, approximately 4:40pm. The interviewers are Mike Russert and Wayne Clark. Could you give me your full name, date of birth and place of birth, please?

GG: Gerald Gersten, October 25th, 1924, Boston, Massachusetts.

Q: Prior to your military service, what was your educational background?

GG: I had some college at Pace University. I was in a food business with my father. I took up marketing and advertising, selling, et cetera.

Q: Okay, where were you and tell us about your feelings when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

GG: I was in Hawaii, we were in the gym, we just got finished working out and all of a sudden somebody said, "Hey, the Japs bombed Pearl Harbor." I said, "What's that?" We didn't know what Pearl Harbor was. They said it's somewhere in Hawaii. Everybody was talking. I was just graduating high school. I took the pre-cadet course. They had a special course. So that when you do enlist, you go right into pilot training. I took the course and I passed the course. The most stupid thing of all is instead of giving you a physical before they give you the course, they gave me the physical after the course. They found I had a murmur of the heart. I thought I was going to be—I was dead, you know what I mean? In March—a couple of months later, I get called for the physical and they check me out. At the end of the line there's a Marine and he says, "Son, how'd you like to join the Marines?" I said, "I can't. I've got a murmured heart." He said, "We'll take you." I outgrew it. The next thing you know, I wound up at Camp Dix. That was March 9.

Q: Did you enlist or were you—

GG: No. I wanted to enlist, but they told me I had a murmur. I went in March 9, 1943. I

went to basic—not to basic, first the reception center. They issued us goose down jackets and all sorts of stuff for winter wear, and they said we're going to Alaska. Oh my god Alaska. I get on a plane. I see a guy, Air Force. We're going to Florida. We went to Miami. They didn't want the people to know that we were going south. My basic was in Miami Beach. I forgot the hotel it was...Ocean Grand Hotel. After basic, I went to Sioux Falls, South Dakota for radio school where I was a long-term student, thank god. From there I went—

Q: Well, why don't you just tell us since that wasn't on tape, why you were a long-term student there?

GG: Because I had the pneumonia. I had two sessions of pneumonia. The pneumonia saved me because the other guys all got killed.

Q: Where did they go?

GG: They went to the 15th Air Force and they were on our Ploesti deal. I wound up after Charleston, South Carolina—And oh they always spread rumors that we're getting a furlough. Nobody had money towards the end of the month. So I sent the SOS to my parents, and they sent me money and they thought it was a big joke because we weren't supposed to get furloughs. And sure enough, they gave us furloughs and I was the only one that went. [Laughter] Then I went to Virginia. It's the site of oh...I think it's Newport News. And we were crewed up and pilots stand on line, radio operators stand on line, bombardier stand—And it just boom, boom, boom, boom. I had two guys from North Carolina. I had one guy from New York who moved to Texas, who we got rid of, who was the scum of the earth. We were going to bounce him off up, we were going to throw him off the plane, that's what a low life he was. He was the kind of guy that claimed that he lost his wallet after he lost a couple of hundred dollars and he didn't have the money. And meanwhile I found it under his pillow. We had a war; I had a fight. It was unbelievable. After we crewed up we went to Westover Field, Massachusetts to do some training and then we wound up—they gave us a plane. It was called the *Colossal Fossil*.

Q: Did you name it? Or was it already named?

GG: No, it was already named. I named my plane, believe it or not. My pilot was probably the shortest pilot in the entire flying. He was about five feet six or seven. His name was Dale Enyart. In fact I even remember his serial number, 0826909. [Laughter] Anyway, Dale he was so short that when he got into the plane you didn't see him. So they called the plane short round. When a bullet is too short to go through the gun, it's called a short round. There's one story that is probably an unbelievable story but it really happened. We were flying on a thousand plane raid to the Henry Ford Truck and Tank Works in Kassel, Germany. Now Henry Ford was one of Hitler's favorites. He had a picture of him in Gestapo headquarters. He was a very violent antisemite, Henry Ford.

Hitler walked right in his footsteps, he loved Henry Ford. It was ironic that we were bombing the Henry Ford Truck and Tank Works in Kassel, Germany. We were in a thousand plane formation and all of a sudden our number three engine starts conking out. That's the most important engine, that's your hydraulics. And we couldn't keep up with the formation they were drifting back. And that's what the Germans loved. They waited. They would take our planes that were shut down and take the pieces, put them together and make them fly and go into our formation. And we were told anytime a plane points its nose at you, a fighter plane. Open fire because it's the Germans. But a lot of planes in the beginning were shot down by them. Our bombers were rebuilt by the Germans and they would sneak into the formation and then they'd open fire when the flak and fires would be coming and the guys wouldn't really know who was shooting at them. Anyway as we're coming back I said, "Dale, drop the bombs." We had twelve 500-pound general all-purpose bombs. And the pilot said, "I'll bring them back." And it doesn't count as a mission, it's an abort. It's called an abortion. As we turned back all of a sudden the landing lights didn't go on. So the engineer is playing around with it, then it goes on it goes off. He says, "Dale I don't know what's wrong with the lights." He says, "Well we'll try it." And we came in at 120 miles an hour with 6,000 pounds of bombs. The landing gear collapsed. And this was the mission that I—We used to get these chest packs. Now a chest pack would put on your side and you pick the pack up and if you hadn't bail out, you'd plump it—But how many times did the plane blow up or you're pinned in the plane and you can't reach for anything. So many a guy got killed because they couldn't get to their packs. I was smart. I put on a backpack. Now the plane crashes and he pulls it off the Runway and the wings crumple and gasoline was held in the wings. We flew with gasoline then. And the 100-octane gasoline is pouring all over the place. The bombs some of them fell in, some of them fell down. We had safety wire on it but you never know especially if there's a fire, then that isn't going to help you. So I go to get out of the—I forgot my backpack, I couldn't get out. And we don't know whether the plane's going to blow, when it's going to blow, what's going to happen. And my co pilot was so scared he got behind me and they say he had extra adrenaline flowing. He gave me a goose. I went shooting through that plane. I flew out, hit the wing, bounced off, ripped the chute off and kept running. Now here's the strangest thing, I knew that we were all going to be safe because nobody even got a scratch. Nobody on that whole plane even got a scratch. Can you visualize driving a car 120 miles an hour and having a blowout on your front wheel. I mean it's incongruous. But my pilot—And then after we come to a full stop and everybody's out. He used to chew on a cigar. He never smoked it. He chewed it. In the beginning he smoked it. We're all out there and we're scared because we thought Dale got killed. He comes like nothing happened. He says, "Everybody all right?"

On our first mission, they used to give us double shots of scotch or rye. So we were all so excited none of us drank except the pilots. We used to feed him—So this is the strangest thing my bombardier had in school this guy—I forgot what his name was. His history professor was the interrogating officer. He was a major. And it was the funniest thing. He looks at him and he says, "Joe Snyderman, what are you doing here?" He says, "Professor, what are you"—He was debriefing us. So he comes to the pilot and he says to

the pilot, "What did you see?" My pilot had five double shots of scotch on an empty stomach. And he says, "I'll tell you the truth. I can't see a fucking thing." [Laughter] We had to take him to his room put him out. You know I tell you when I think of it, I mean, you had to be crazy to get involved—One other thing I remember, I mean the flak and all that stuff that everybody talks about. But my last mission was supposed to be the easiest mission of all. You remember the Remagen Bridgehead? So they were going to make a deal. They were going to split our group and part were going to supply the British and part we're going to supply the Americans. We would fly low and because it was so tempting, they only allowed us 15 rounds to a gun. They took out our ammunition. We were flying at an altitude; I would say maybe 100 feet maybe 50 feet. We were flying under these slag piles—that's like the burnt-out coals they used to pile in France—to go towards the Remagen Bridgehead. Well, the British didn't get there on time and the Germans kicked the hell out of them. And part of the group that flew to the British got the hell kicked out of them. We sent over 30 planes and I think we lost about six or seven of them and that's a lot. That's 60 guys getting killed. The Germans could throw rocks and hit us. That's how low—

Q: This was the Market Garden where they were capturing the bridge and the tanks were—

GG: Yeah, the Remagen, that was the last bridge in Germany. That was that bridgehead. So when we went to push out all the supplies—So I grab onto one big thing I thought it was—But what was it? It was the chute and it's pulling me right out of the plane. And luckily I just had enough to—If my fingers were a little bit shorter, I would have gone right out. But then they pulled me in, but, you know, and I said to myself, "Son of a bitch. This was supposed to be an easy one."

Q: So when did you get over to England?

GG: We got over to England the end of July.

Q: Did you fly over?

GG: Oh yeah, we took this plane. We went to Manchester, New Hampshire. Then we went to Goose Bay, Labrador. Then we went to Iceland. And then we went to Stone, England—that's in Wales. And then we dumped this guy, this creep, at the repple depot [Replacement Depot]. That's where they dump all the stiffs. And we wound up with the 392nd in Wendling. "Wendling-on-the-Wash," they called it. I think it's south of London.

Q: Now this plane you flew over was the Colossal Fossil you said?

GG: We flew over the Colossal Fossil. But then we got a new plane, and it was called Short Round.

Q: Was it painted or was it—

GG: Short Round. We had Short Round.

Q: Well, I mean was your plane silver or was it painted—the brown?

GG: No. I think we flew one or two missions in a brown—not our plane—and then we got our own.

Q: Did you do any other decoration on the nose except the name?

GG: No we just put Short Round on it.

Q: Did you ever decorate your jackets?

GG: Oh yeah, we had the jacket with the bombs on it and all that stuff. I probably have it buried somewhere in a closet and I don't even know where the heck it is. I had a gun collection of all sorts of stuff. I got this charge from—Well, there's another story. I was amongst the early guys to get out, but before we got out, when we came back they shoved me into the MPs back in South Dakota and they put me with...I said, "What the heck kind of nonsense is this?" So they put me guarding the so called gasoline at the other end. I figured I'd stack up a little bit and lo and behold the CO try to play games with me. You know, if they catch a guard sleeping, they reduce him in rank, court martial, the whole bit. And I'm left-handed so I had the gun on my left side. And as this guy came—I have a sixth sense nobody was ever able to wake me because I know when they—And I sort of saw this guy reaching to my right. I pulled out the gun and put it right in his mouth. And I said, "I did 33 missions. I've got a very nervous trigger finger." I said, "Back off and identify yourself." It was the CO. This guy was the guy that got the Congressional Medal of Honor for Ploesti. And he fucked up. He caused all those acts, all those guys to get killed and they gave him a congressional. They hushed it up and they made him a hero. What the heck was his name again? Jeez, I forgot what his name was...Kane. Killer Kane, that's what they called him. That's what the guys—anybody that was on that mission with him, they called him Killer Kane not because he was a hero, but because he caused guys to get killed. You know they'll hush it up and they'll say all kinds of things, but that's what happened. Then he said to me, "I'll fix you." And he transferred me out. I wound up in Tucson, Arizona. It was the best thing that could have happened to me.

Q: So you had 33 missions. Can you tell us about some of the others? Or did your whole crew stay together for those whole 33, except for the guy you—

GG: Yes. The one mission where I lost my heated suit. My heated suit shorted out and I got frostbitten. I lost all the nails on my fingers and on my toes. But fortunately, we had a stand down which means we didn't get any missions for two weeks. I could have gone in

and gotten the Purple Heart and had all that stuff. But I treated myself because I didn't want I didn't want to lose my crew. So luckily for us, I had two weeks and we continued, because once you get injured you get reassigned, and I didn't want to leave my crew come hell or high water. We flew all our missions together. Which was unusual. In fact, we were like the senior crew. When the war was over, when it was all over and the group broke up, we still had our own plane and we flew some of the brass over. We wound up in Connecticut. We landed in a field in Connecticut. What the heck was in there? Bradley Field. In Connecticut. And we took the brass and that was it.

Q: Do you keep in touch with those guys?

GG: I think they're all dead. I think I'm the only survivor.

Q: Did you have any missions or many missions where your plane was really damaged heavily from flak?

GG: Well, there's a very strange phenomenon. They issued us flak suits. Nobody ever wore a flak suit. We stood on them. Everybody protected their privates. That was the whole—I mean that was the sole purpose of a flak suit. Including the hat, the helmet. We put that right between—we put whatever we could put between our legs and that helmet we would press—Some of the guys used to put something, try to tape it around their privates. We came back with, you know, everybody gets holes in their planes. From the third mission on when we, when we crash landed that time from that—I knew nothing was going to happen to us. It was like an omen from God and we were lucky. Everybody wanted to fly with us. There was always 10 men, nine plus a Mickey man—A Mickey man is, these were radar guys the anti-radar men. In the beginning, we used to throw out chaff, you know, when the kids were collecting silver foil. Well, the silver foil threw off the German radar. Each piece of chaff registered as a plane. So they don't know which was—But they kept them improving because the Germans, their weapons were the best of all. They had better weaponry than what we had. Much better. Their 88s were—They were so good that we went to a place called Halle, and it's on the eastern side. And as we're flying, all of a sudden one plane goes down. It's a horrible—every time you see a plane going down, you feel it, you're a part of it. So the plane to my right goes down, the plane to my left goes down, the plane in front of me goes down. And you say we're next positively. It was the flak. They had flak that looked as if a plane was going down. What they did with the weaponry, as they were beginning to lose their ammunition, they began using improvising. So instead of using pellets, the ball bearings and stuff like that, the temperature on these things incidentally ran about 2,000 degrees. So if a piece of flak would go into your ship and hit you, it would go right through your hand and go through your bone. It was that hot. I mean it was unbelievable. It was like somebody working in a steel mill and a piece of the red hot. That's how hot it was. At 2,000 degrees it was, it would melt you. Anyway, many a guy got killed just by a little pellet went through the head. If it hit him in the head, right through the head, go right through. Anyway, so they were beginning to use letters from Linotype. Those little letters that they put in type.

Well, one of the missions we got hit, got holes all over them. And all of a sudden we hear one ping and it winds up in the top turret and embeds itself in the top turret. And the letter was A. And my engineer's name was Aycock. I said to him, "Charlie, that was for you." [Laughing]

Q: Now who were these Mickey men?

GG: A Mickey man is an anti-radar. They have a radar, some kind of a unit that sends out signals to counteract the German radar. We call them Mickey. I don't know what the real is—It was probably mic something, etcetera.

Q: Some kind of radar jamming device?

GG: Yeah, that's what it was. There would be nine guys on a crew and on a mission they would take one Mickey man on—especially towards the end we were deputy lead, we were flying behind the lead and if he got hit, we would take over. We were lucky, we were a lucky crew. We're probably the luckiest crew around. But we saw it all. There was one mission, one of the guys. They finished their—It was at that time, it was like 30 missions. They came back for their last mission and they took the—what do you call the gun that shoots up the flares? The flare gun. And they fired and it didn't go through the plane. It stayed in the plane. The plane caught fire, blew up on their last mission just over the base. So no flare guns were to be used unless in an absolute emergency. When they would shoot flares, the plane—let's put it this way—if there were wounded aboard, they'd fire a red flare. That would give us that plane priority to make the landing first because some of the wounds had to be treated immediately. If they fired a green flare, that meant there was structural damage so that the trucks and all that stuff were ready in case the plane blew up on the ground when it made the land. But the reds got priority the wounded. Let's say the mission was scrubbed. They would fire a red flare that would mean the mission was scrubbed. And they would announce Alamogordo. Alamogordo is where my group assembled. And that was like the code word, no mission. That's how they would do it. Here's a very strange story we'd go into for a mission. They get you up like 3 o'clock in the morning and you'd have breakfast. Noncoms had the best breakfast. We ate, I mean you name it, we had it. Breakfast would consist of steak and eggs. I mean they really—The ground pounders used to try to come into our mess hall. Ground pounders are those that didn't fly; we call them ground pounders. After we have a very hearty meal, we'd go for briefing. Now they'd have this map on the wall which would be covered. But we knew where we were going to go before they even unrolled the map. If there were three chaplains there, you were going to go to one of the Bs. There were three Bs: big B, middle B and little B. Big B was Berlin, middle B was Bremen and little B was Brunswick. Brunswick was the steelworks, Bremen was the port, and big B was Berlin, which was the hottest target of them all. In fact, in some of these hot targets, the Germans put railroad guns. What they did, you have an 88-millimeter, the 88-cannon. That gun is the equivalent on a navy ship of a—we'll say a 8-inch gun, 10-inch gun. But they used to put on the railroad, they put the equivalent of 16-inch guns. They were so powerful that

the train itself had a special extra weight. When they fired those guns, they would cover the sky. It was the most awesome thing you ever saw. We got hit by them once and we couldn't wait—I was looking for fighters. I was praying fighters because when the fighters come, the flak stops. And that was probably one of the scariest experiences of my life. When they fired those railroad guns. They were awesome. They were awesome. I mean visualize a 16-inch gun firing straight up what it carried. They carried like over a thousand pounds of, you name it, whatever you want to call it, white hot through the sky. And you know, people say if it touches you, it burns you. If you get hit in the finger, it'll take piece of that part of the finger, it'll take it off. If you get hit in the elbow, that bullet goes right through your bone. It's awesome. And visualize these were millions and millions of pellets. Unreal. That's the way it was. But we were lucky. We were a lucky crew.

Q: Were most of your raids into Germany or did you go into France or Poland?

GG: I think I had one raid in France. Most of all in Germany. When I see a map of Germany I could pick—here's the ironic—this is very funny. My daughter worked for a company and she went to Hamburg. She says to the guy, “Very strange world.” She says, “My father bombed this place.” My son, Monday, he went to Frankfurt and Dusseldorf, I said, “I bombed both places!” [Laughing]

Q: When you came back, did you join any veterans groups or have you joined?

GG: I joined the Jewish War Veterans and then I have the 8th Air Force Society and whatever else there was. I joined just about all of them...[reaches in pocket] I have just one card.

Q: Do you ever go to any of the reunions?

GG: Oh, yeah. They honored the 14th Combat Wing in Norwich, England. A lot of the B24s were based there. They built a library, a magnificent library. That library has one section is devoted to our group. The CO of that 14th Combat Wing was a guy you all know, Jimmy Stewart. Now Jimmy Stewart was probably the finest representative of Hollywood. He never shunned a mission—not like Clark Gable. They gave him milk runs. They gave him—But I'm speaking about—this guy went to Berlin. This guy, he was a gentleman. He was the nicest guy.

Q: Did you ever meet him?

GG: Yeah, I met him. So anyway, as we were driving through this town. We went back to our base, and my base is now a turkey farm. They had these kids jumping out of their cars. “Yanks, God bless you.” Then we had one man, he said, “the jerrys blew up our home and the Yanks took me and my family. They billeted us and they fed us.” And he

says, "I owe my life to the Yanks." This was 60 years later. It was such a feeling. I mean, we were treated as if we were royalty. Then we went to this huge cathedral, and all the big shots blessed the whole 8th Air Force. It was awesome. It was awesome. We had banquets and this and that. It was remarkable.

Q: What's that card you got there?

GG: [Holds up card to camera] This was the Historical Society. In Georgia that's where it all originated in. Let me just see hold on...[Reading card] Now what's the city in Georgia? It wasn't Atlanta...It was Savannah. They built this museum—In fact my name is one of the names there—It's magnificent. They've done something that no other place has done. You go into a room and they have exactly what a bombing raid consisted of. And you feel as if you're part of it. You hear the machine guns going off, you hear the flak. It's as if you're on a mission. And people walk out of that room all white. You know what I mean? And then I belong to the...let's see, another group. I've gone to a number of reunions.

Q: What squadron was it that you were in, did you say?

GG: The 577th Bomb Squadron, 392nd Bomb Group in Wendling.

Q: Do you have any photographs of yourself in uniform?

GG: Yeah, I have a picture sitting on a 4,000-pound bomb. There's another funny story. When we first went into basic, I went into the Air Force. There was a guy named Earhart. He came from Antler, Oklahoma. He was a real country hick. I don't mean country hick by the way, I mean, when I say country hick. I said to him, "You know, Earhart"—first of all, I saw this guy pick up a 500-pound bomb just like this. He's the kind of guy, when somebody asks him direction, he'd pick up the plow point. Anyway, I said to him, "Earhart, do you know that they wrote a song about your state, Oklahoma?" And he says, "You funning me." I said, "You big moron. It goes like this, Oklahoma, where the sun goes sweep." [Singing] You know what he did? He picked me up and threatened to throw me on the ground. He says, "You funning my state." And I yelled to one of the inside from New York, I said, "Will you please sing me Oklahoma before I get killed?" And they start singing it and he says, "You weren't funning me?" I said, "No, you dumb hokey son of a bitch." He put me down. You could call him any name, but don't make fun of his state. [Laughing]

Q: Did you ever make use of the GI Bill?

GG: Yeah, when I went to Pace, I used that.

Q: How about the 52-20 Club? Ever used that at all?

GG: Very little. I did very little on that. I should have used it all because it was wonderful for mortgages and stuff. Wow. It did some job.

Q: What was it like when President Roosevelt died? How did you all feel?

GG: A very strange way. I heard it. We turned on not Axis Sally, the other one. Lord Haw-Haw, "Achtung, Achtung, de President from the United Stats is tote." I was able—I translated. I said, "Hey, those Nazi bastards, they said, the President of the United States is dead." I said, "Boy, what stupid propaganda that was." And lo and behold, it was true. Boy, we were really PO'd. There's another story that you would appreciate. When guys got shot down, they would pray that the German soldiers would grab them because the civilians would come at them with pitchforks and they'd tear them to pieces. They'd just chop them up. There's a town in Hanau in Germany where the British. They bombed the place and they got shot down—two planes, there were like 12 people—they were alive and they were attacked by the German civilians, and they chopped them to pieces with their pitchforks. And on every bombing mission that was in the area, they always saved a bomb for Hanau. The British, they always made sure that they wouldn't drop the full load. From that point on, the British always dropped one extra bomb on Hanau. It's amazing. Isn't that a story?

Q: Were you involved in any of the daylight raids into Berlin?

GG: I didn't go to Berlin, thank God. I didn't hit Berlin. After the war, we ferried the ground people. We took them around Berlin and flew around Berlin. I'll tell you a funny story. There was a wack—she was Air Force, whatever it was, she was a major. She was a bitch. She was so uniform happy—In combat crews, the way rank didn't mean anything. The pilot was the boss, but we were very close knit—It was like one unit. And this bitch, she would walk by and make you salute and all that nonsense. Anyway, we took her on this—Now we had a relief tube on the plane which was a funnel with a rubber hose. And if you had, it was very seldom that you could go because you would do all the clothes and you wore shorts, long johns. Then you wore...what do you call it...flight suit. Then you wore a heated suit. And then you wore a leather suit over that lambswool suit—the temperatures, by the way, were as high as minus 60. It was so cold. In the beginning, a lot of guys died from suffocation because their oxygen masks clogged up from their water vapor from their breathing. So in the beginning, we found a way to stop it. We cut the tips of condoms and put it over, and it stopped it. And in the beginning, the Air Force used more condoms than the entire armed services put together. They thought we were a bunch of sex fiends, but it was for safety, you know what I mean? [Laughing]

Q: So tell us her story about her.

GG: Oh, so anyway, she goes on this trip, and I hated that bitch. I said to Dale, "Dale,

when I go [clearing throat] you just say, roger." So she starts asking, "What's this? What's this?" I said, "Oh, that's special communication for the pilot in case of emergency." So she says, ""Can I try it?" I said, "Go ahead." And I go [clearing throat] she has the headsets on. Dale goes, "roger, roger." And she said, "It smells funny." Well, everybody knew about it. And the rumor spread. Well, they called her by proxy. You know, I don't have to tell you. She was ready to kill me. She found out what happened. She was ready to kill me. [Laughing]

Q: What was your reaction when you heard about the atomic bombs being dropped?

GG: I said it was about time. It was amazing. In the beginning, they were using the bomb sites. But then as we got more and more planes together, we began using the lead plane, would drop the bomb, and then we'd drop on the lead plane. In some instances, the lead plane would drop on the—in one instance, a B17 got his tail bombed off. But he made it. It was amazing. That guy made it. Sometimes a wing would get hit. I wouldn't exaggerate if I tell you we lost at least 200 planes. Just formation flying. We had green pilots. And the tighter the formation, the more central fire. You have wind, you have all kinds—You're flying for four hours this way close. So they used to practice before they do it. One of the most scary things I ever had was my co pilot—The copilots were not very good. So my co pilot couldn't land a plane worth a damn. On every mission, a radio operator and a flight engineer had to go. My copilot was so bad that my pilot shot landings with him. Can you visualize 10 landings with a sloppy pilot like that? He would come in high and he'd zoom in. He'd come in low and be scared if we thought we were going to get hit. It was the scariest thing until after the 10th landing. The pilot said, "To hell with it. I'll do whatever myself." But he taught all of us how to fly. He taught us how to slow down the engines, how to—in case of an emergency to at least crash land the plane whichever way we could. But that's what we learned. He was a super pilot. When I think of him, he was just marvelous. He was the kind of guy that should have been a general, but he liked the source too much. And he was a reprobate. [Laughing]

Q: Tell us the story on camera. He's the one that set up the chaplain.

GG: Yeah, we had a chaplain who had a master's degree in Hebrew. He says, "I wanted to learn it from the source." And he was the sweetest guy you ever want to meet, but he liked source. And my pilot was a real reprobate. And he hired one of the local town prostitutes to climb into bed with this father. The father was. He was a little high. And he went, plopped him into bed and in comes this prostitute. She jumps into bed. She strips naked. He opens his eyes, takes one look at her, and his reaction was unbelievable. I forgive you, my child. And he gives her his blessing and he jumps right out of bed and walks out of the room. [Laughing]

Q: When were you discharged?

GG: I was discharged September 25, 1945. When I came home, everybody had such long faces. My uncle was discharged two weeks before me. When he went to get a bus, he got run over and killed.

Q: I don't know if we've asked this of many in the Air Force. Were you aware of concentration camps and their existence?

GG: Oh, sure. In fact, we were hoping to bomb these bastards. I had friends of mine that were in PWs and saw what was going on. There's another story that would be very interesting. One of my friends was in the concentration camp and they moved them as the American troops were moving in. They would move them further and they'd walk them. One of the guards had a wart in his shoe, he had a spike that stuck out. And if anybody slowed down, he'd kick him and it would make a penetrating wound. Many a guy got crippled on account of that. And they were in Nuremberg, and all of a sudden they hear a lot of noise, and they all run to the bathroom where they dug in or whatever it is, and who pulls up, lo and behold, Patton. He lines them up and he says, "Which one of these son of a bitches mistreated you?" And they all pointed to that guard with the spike. They got around back of the place. Bang, bang. Patton did his own killing. Patton knocked him off. He was one tough guy, but that's what happened. Patton did it.

Q: Did you ever go to any USO shows.

GG: That's where I saw Oklahoma. I saw Oklahoma twice. I saw it in 1943. Now in 2002. The first version was better. It was cheaper. [Laughing]

Q: Okay, well, thank you very much. It was a great interview.

GG: Thank you.