

Robert Goldsworthy

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QUESTION: Your name is?

ANSWER: Robert Goldsworthy.

QUESTION: Retired?

ANSWER: Retired.

QUESTION: Did you do a career?

ANSWER: No, I got 35 years but in active reserve and then I retired after my 35 years but I was really a civilian during the last few years, I farmed down south of Spokane a ways.

QUESTION: Which branch of the service were you in?

ANSWER: Airforce.

QUESTION: Did you grow up in Washington?

ANSWER: A little town south of Spokane, Rosalia, you've probably never heard of it.

QUESTION: Oh I have. I'm a Wazzu graduate. We can't say Wazzu anymore I guess.

ANSWER: I'm never going to stop saying Wazzu.

QUESTION: I've still got to write a letter to the president because I think that is so stupid.

ANSWER: I couldn't understand it but I don't think anybody is going to pay attention to it. You've been through Rosalia then?

QUESTION: Oh yeah yeah.

ANSWER: My family homesteaded out there years and years ago farm outside and I grew up there. Went back there. I was in World War II and then Korea. When I got out after Korea why I got out and stayed in the active reserves and went back to help my dad. He was getting elderly.

QUESTION: So were you on the farm when Pearl Harbor happened or where were you?

ANSWER: No I was in the service then. I went in about a year I was in the service and I was stationed down in Texas when Pearl Harbor. I was a flight instructor down there and then Pearl Harbor, and everything changed the whole world changed.

QUESTION: Do you remember hearing the news?

ANSWER: Oh yes, very well. We heard it on the radio and I remember one of my friends down there that I flew with he was around the house and he says oh sheesh we'll win this war in about two weeks, and said it'll all be over before we ever get a chance to get over there. Sure, sure two weeks, we underestimated that pretty well. But it was uh.. so like any other place, Pearl Harbor remember Pearl Harbor. It had us all excited.. it was a.. well it changed the world, well the world already was half in flames but this did it.

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QUESTION: When you joined the service did you have any idea you would be, like kids join today, well up there a couple years ago they thought well this is a pretty good job then they had to go to the middle east they said wait a minute we didn't sign up for this tour. When you got in did you have any idea that possibly?

ANSWER: Not when I went in. I wanted to fly. Always since I was a little kid I had a love affair with airplanes, and I don't know why because nobody in my family was ever interested in flying out there on the farm but my brother went into the service ahead of me but when I was small by golly I think it was Lindbergh's flight, I was going to fly and as I remember in sixth grade when Lindbergh made the flight and he was a hero for me from then on. Well anyway I went in a year before the war started so I was commissioned and had my wings and was a flight instructor and life was pretty... I really enjoyed those days. Then my wife came down to Texas and we got married and all my other classmates were getting married so you know.. it was a great life. If I've thought about any period in my life I would do over again, it would be that year before the war started.

QUESTION: Was that your sweetheart from back home?

ANSWER: Yeah. We'd gone steady since high school days and through Washington State and all the time, so she came down and we got married at Randolph Field, Texas. But then war started and everything changed. My classmates were going over seas and I wanted to get over seas, and my wife didn't understand it and we had some words about that. And I had a good job, I was a flight instructor at the best flying school in Texas, San Antonio, Texas, and then I got transferred to Smyrna, Tennessee, and they flew B-24's and I thought then I would be going over to the 8th air force. But they kept me as an instructor again on B-24's so I guess once I had that instructing experience they wanted to keep me on so. It wasn't until the B-29 came out and I volunteered for that and my wife kind of threw up her hands and said aw if you're going to you're going to so she said go ahead and I went into B-29's and went over seas with a 29 wing.

QUESTION: It's interesting because nobody has talked of that aspect of it. They talk about leaving their girl friends behind but nobody has actually talked about having an actual discussion with their wife. People say things are difficult today, but to tell your wife I want to go over there.

ANSWER: She couldn't understand it and I can understand why she wouldn't understand it. She couldn't understand my feelings really but after the war started I volunteered for B-17's training in Sebring, Florida, and told her I'd put my name on the list and then we had quite a serious discussion it was one way. I didn't say much, but I took my name off the list, she said I can't understand why you want to go over and get shot at. So I then when the B-24 list came out and then I volunteered for that she said alright, that is when I went to Smyrna, Tennessee. Then went down to Matra Field, Alabama, as an instructor, then when the 29's came out and I said I just got to do it, she said alright. But if I'd known what was coming ahead I don't think I'd have been so eager to volunteer, but if I'd of known I'd sit in that cell in Japan that winter, I think I'd of stayed home.

QUESTION: We interviewed a gentlemen from up in Newport and he was a ball turret gunner, Bill Langdon, is his name, he said you know we took all that training and everything like that and when you got on that first flight he said you know in that training I never ever ever thought they'd be firing back at us.

ANSWER: Always a little surprised when you see them shooting back.

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QUESTION: Our first mission I was on Saipan, in the Marianna's for the old 73rd bomb wing the first wing that made the sorties into Honshu Island itself, Tokyo area. And we went down to Truk to the submarine pens to bomb them it was kind of a warm up mission really and we didn't get to count it as a combat mission but we made our runs on the submarine pens and coming out there was a Japanese fighter above us and they used to have these Phosphorous Bombs, which were deadly if they ever got on you because they'd burn , they'd burn right through a wing but he was a ways off and he dropped this Phosphorous Bomb, but it was real pretty, wasn't any danger to us, then he made a roll and came on in and you could see him shooting and we kind of sat there and took us awhile before we shot back, he's shooting at us, you couldn't believe this was happening. We had our eyes wide open and he was out of range. One of our formation claimed he shot him down, one of our bombardiers said I got him, I got him, did you see that, no one did, but anyway it was a good story.

QUESTION: How big of a squadron would you be flying with?

ANSWER: Well, we had groups then instead of wings and there were four groups to a wing, three squadrons to a group and the 500 bomb group which I belong to 881st squadron we had I think 9 planes to a squadron and four squadrons so the group would be forty some planes.

QUESTION: For someone that's never been up in these planes tell me what your job is, getting ready, getting on the plane, what the plane looks like, how much space.

ANSWER: Well, a B-29 was a state of the art airplane at the time and it was pressurized, first pressurized plane that we had. And it was a rush production. This thing was I think in on the drawing board in '42 when they first flew one and it was '44 when we went overseas and it wasn't quite ready. The engines were not very good. They had an overheating problem and they had central fire control which means that the gunners would sit there with their sight at their blisterer but their guns the turrets were are on top or on the bottom of the plane so the gunners were electronically controlling the turrets and the guns with the sight and the only ones that really had guns with him would be the tail gunner. Well, this central fire control was a new concept also. And it took a little while a lot of times the gunner would be lined up on a target but the guns wouldn't be quite harmonized and would be just off a bit so well you know you don't shoot down many things like that but it was growing pains. They worked on that and the engines we were in Kansas with our first training with the B-29's and didn't have many we were flying more B-17's than we were B-29's because we just didn't have the airplanes. And in the hot Kansas summer these engines would overheat so badly a lot of times we'd taxi down the runway shut down all engines and wait until the cylinder head temperatures came down into a safe range, then start up and go before the needles got up into the red again. And you know you always check mags before you take off to see that all the magnetos are functioning and its just routine but you sit there at the end of the run way and run your engine and check your mags. But then we got to checking them on the take off roll but you don't like to do that cause you switch a little too far and you've lost an engine. But that was some of the growing pains we had with a B-29 and it was just not quite ready for combat flying. Too many problems. We lost a lot of planes through engine failures and in fact I landed in Kansas one time and there was a 29 going in right ahead of me and I was on the final approach back and as soon as the one ahead of me touched down an engine came off. A whole engine came off and it was rolling and tumbling down the runway ahead of me so I was going to go around but then it finally rolled off to the side so we went ahead and landed. You just couldn't believe seeing that whole engine, it wasn't just a prop or anything, the whole engine came off. Well those things happen but they finally made a tremendous airplane out of the B-29 and it was good instrument airplane. Good solid platform for bombing and pressurized and this is one thing that got me into a lot of trouble. We call it a shirtsleeve

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airplane because it was temperature controlled in there pressurized you know. If you could keep the airplane at high altitudes you could keep it warm and you didn't have to have heavy flying clothes on. So the day I got shot down we left Saipan and it was very hot so I just had a summer flying suit on as did most of my crew and then of course we got shot down and a terrible hard winter was coming up in Japan. And I spent the winter in a little cold freezing cell with a summer flying suit on and nothing else and no heat in the cell, just a terribly cold bitter winter. I used to think of that winter flying outfit I had that I never wore but yeah I got so gall darn cold that winter I think it took five years after I got home to ever get warm.

QUESTION: How many missions had you flown before you got shot down?

ANSWER: This was my third over Tokyo so I didn't do much for the war effort.

QUESTION: What was the average, I know some flew a lot but there were a lot that?

ANSWER: We lost quite a few, all of our lead crews, I was a lead crew, and we lost all of our lead crews. We lost all of our operation officers, I was operation officer of the squadron, and had this crew. We lost most of the squadron commanders and I don't know the percentage, but I think when you started you flew thirty missions before you got to go home, then I think they raised it to thirty five, but I was long gone by that time. A lot of them made it alright, some my uh.. co-pilot wasn't with me the day I got shot down, my group commander had decided to fly on my airplane so he took my right seat and left my copilot at home. He was assigned to another crew and they went thirty or thirty-five missions and never got a scratch. Not even a bullet hole as I remember and he got out and he went home but of course that is luck of the draw. Other people got rammed. We had quite a few rammed by Japanese fighters. And when they got those guns harmonized we had a lot of firepower on that B-29 so the Japanese were taking.. we were losing a lot of planes just from aerial gunnery. We didn't lose many 29's from flak in those days and flak wasn't all that accurate. They didn't really have good radar controlled guns and so that wasn't so bad. We lost some but it wasn't too bad, but fighters were another thing. They had good fighters. That zero.. and that Tony was what got me, and our intelligence said they can't fly above 30,000 feet, the planes can't get up there, but I was at 33,000 feet and they were sure flying around that day. So we had to reevaluate our information a little bit on Japanese fighters but they were good. They were much better at the beginning of the war. Much better than we had. You remember the battle of Midway we had those A-24's, we call them in the airforce, the Douglas Dive Bomber I think it was, and they were out there dive bombing on those Japanese ships and just getting knocked down just as fast as the zero could come up on them because the zeros were faster and more maneuverable and these fellows going in to dive bomb were trying to keep a steady platform for a proper dive, and gees they were just getting. What was that torpedo squadron eight where only one man out of the squadron, Ensign Gay, name was Gay and he was the only one that floated around and got shot down and the whole squadron was demolished eliminated and wiped out and he floated around and watched the battle from his little life raft out there, only survivor. That battle of Midway was really a turning point in the war. That was only six months into the war but we were flying outmoded aircraft against the Japanese.

QUESTION: Now when you got to the south Pacific did you fly the same plane all the time?

ANSWER: Yeah, we had our same plane.

QUESTION: Did yours have a name, I always see the ones with the pictures?

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ANSWER: Oh yes I had a name. I named it Rosalia Rocket after my little hometown Rosalia as you can guess, but we didn't have time to get it painted on the nose, so when we went down why my nose was bare no pretty girls on there or anything like that. Rosalia Rocket But it didn't last very long.

QUESTION: We were up at LaConner a couple weeks ago and they had an article where the kids of the school had raised all this money to get a plane named and I guess when they rolled them off like a city might get a name like the LaConner something but that name only stayed on until it got wherever and then erased it and somebody else.

ANSWER: Yeah, that happens.

QUESTION: Your crew, did you fly with the same crew all the time?

ANSWER: Yes, I had the same crew and uhm.. I'm the only one left today of that crew other than my co-pilot that didn't fly with me that day but he is still alive all the rest are. I had twelve aboard since I had my group commander flying with me, and I had a full colonel out of wing headquarters that flew along as an observer and he went with me I guess because my group commander went along with me and they were friends. So anyway I had twelve aboard and as far as I can tell piecing it together afterwards nine got out of the airplane that I can account for but I personally can only account for five in the Kempetai Prison that I was in. And out of that five, three of us came home so three out of twelve made it back to the states after the war. The colonel out of wing headquarters was in the cell next to me and he lost his reason, about two months is all he lived, it was pretty bad treatment.

QUESTION: What was the mission that day?

ANSWER: The mission was the Mitsubishi Aircraft Engine factory outside, about half way between Tokyo and Yokohama.

I don't know if you heard 357, that was the number of the target and it was an infamous number. And everybody when its mentioned 357, oh don't talk to me about 357, we lost more airplanes over that target than any target in Japan and it was an important target because it was an engine factory. And our bombing was pretty bad. In those first raids I don't know if we hit anything, we thought we did, but after the war we found out the planes were hitting 357. But the Japanese were just patching up the roof making it look like they were in production so we'd have another mission and they'd have all the fighters around in the area lined up to get them. And really the factory wasn't producing that much but we didn't know that after the war. But we lost fifty some airplanes over that one target cause it was right in the Tokyo area and very heavily defended.

QUESTION: Kind of a decoy basically?

ANSWER: Yeah, they used it as I understand later on in the war after we really had spent so many bombs on it, it wasn't in production like we thought and kind of a decoy because they could pull us in and get the fighters up. So it we lost a lot of planes, 357 that could be nightmare time.

QUESTION: So you took off of Saipan, you took off in the morning?

ANSWER: We took off at about 8 o'clock in the morning and it was about a sixteen hour mission. And so we get up there in the afternoon, we go in formation, in fact I didn't get over the target my first mission, I was leading that one too. But I had engine failure and so we got

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up over the island, we salvoed our bombs and pulled out and let the deputy leader come on in. And I think we were in the air eighteen hours on that mission coming back on three we were slow, slower. But missions ran around sixteen hours and that is a long flight up there and back especially over water. And we had three submarines stationed out there rescue and but you take 1500, 1800 miles open water and three submarines they don't spread out very far. But we did have crew picked up by those subs and in fact when I got hit the first fighter than came in got me I was losing gasoline. I knew I wasn't going to get home so I had the radio operator call a submarine rescue, and say we were going to start giving our positions because we were going to have to ditch on our way back. But then we got on fire so that ended that.

I had a good friend that got picked up by a sub he ditched on the way home but instead of a rescue sub it was a sub out on combat patrol and they took him right back up into Tokyo harbor where for thirty days he sat on combat patrol and he had just bombed Tokyo a few hours before and there he is sitting at Tokyo Harbor in the submarine. He said no never again. They weren't going to get him on any kind of a boat whatsoever let alone a submarine. It must have been kind of interesting they let him look through the periscope. They were of course submerged most all the time but they would go up to view shipping and battleship maneuvers and aircraft carriers. But he could see the skyline from that sub. Boy wouldn't that be something to sit in a submarine all that time? Just miles from home enemy shores and, no, he didn't like it. Name of Bricker. Don't know what happened to him.

QUESTION: So when you got shot down, you said you caught on fire?

ANSWER: Yeah, we had a couple of engines shot out. And had a runaway prop. And we knew we weren't going to go anyplace but then we had a fire, I don't know where it started, but we had a wing on fire, then the fire started inside. You know an oxygen system can burn, and so we were very hot inside and the whole plane was. I didn't have contact with the guys in the back, my intercom was all shot out, had no communication whatsoever but everyone could see that the thing was going down, had no control.

QUESTION: What altitude were you?

ANSWER: 33 thousand.

QUESTION: So you lost communication with everybody so you can't give the bail out order?

ANSWER: No I couldn't.. but in the front end my engineer was sitting right beside the nose hatch where our escape hatch is and that's where the nose wheel comes in and he was opening the hatch and kicking the nose wheel out because the electric system was all gone. But he got the wheel down and so he got the guys in front got out alright but I don't think my navigator he was right back of the turret, the main turret and that's where the fire started. And I think he and the radio guy never got out I'm sure the fire consumed them. But my bombardier was sitting in the have you been in a B-29 well the pilot and co pilot and bombardier is right there and I could put my foot on him he was that close. And I in fact I kicked him in back of the head get him to get on up and get out of there because I was losing control of the airplane, everybody else had gone. And I had forgotten to hook up my emergency oxygen cylinder. You carry a little thing on your leg, and so if you lose pressure you can hook your mask up to this and it gives you about 3-4 minutes I remember of oxygen. I went out of the airplane and remembered I forgot to hook that thing up and there I was 33,000 feet, summer flying suit, temperature about 70 below zero and you can't breathe up there. And luckily I remembered that and I fell free when I went out and tumbled down to about 20,000 or 15,000 before I opened my shoot. But then I saw off in the distance I saw a

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parachute going down that was on fire. And I didn't know if that was my little bombardier or not because he was right there when we went through and if he had popped his suit or if his suit had caught on fire somehow. I was burned, the skin off my hands had been burned off and face was burned, so he might have been, his chute might have caught fire. I don't know, but I saw this chute and it kind of disintegrated and disappeared and whoever was in it was obviously killed and I never heard again from my bombardier so I don't know. I always thought that might have been Pat that was in that chute. But I fell free so I was out of the flames.

QUESTION: This is what history books don't tell us. Do you remember in the ballpark how old were you now?

ANSWER: I was twenty-six.

QUESTION: Twenty six years old in a situation like this does your mind take control and can you slow the world down or is it chaos and you think oh my goodness.

ANSWER: Pretty much chaos as I remember. I did think when we went out of the airplane I remembered that oxygen tank I didn't hook up so I made my free fall. But after I got my shoot open it was a beautiful day, it was the 3rd day of December of 1944 and a bright sunny day. And all of Japan and all of Tokyo right there before me and my mind was in a whirl but I made a real sincere prayer. I said God I'm falling into some deep deep trouble please give me the strength to endure. So I kept that in my mind, everybody talks to God a little bit and I did, I said please give me the strength to endure. I knew it was going to be a tough go and they killed so many of our guys and just recently in the last few years we've been given reports on the number of B-29 crewmembers who were beheaded and its surprising they killed so many of these people, and we were one of the first crews that they got and I had two full colonels aboard so they surely wanted to keep us alive but.

A very interesting story when I vacation on Maui in the wintertime I met a Japanese lady over there by chance and she was living in the same condominium we were in. She was a teenager during the war and as it turned out she lived pretty close to the Kempetai Prison I was in in Tokyo. And then later in the war her home was burned down during the fire raids, and she was moved out to Omori, Near Omori, where the Omori POW Camp was that I was in. So we were neighbors all that time. Well fifty years later that we found this out you know and I accused her of being among the women that beat the tar out of me when I landed, and she accused me of burning her house down. In fact I got an e-mail from her just yesterday and uh.. and in Yokohama. And anyway she got interested in the history of where my plane went down and this sort of thing. So she arranged over a period of time she investigated and found out where my plane crashed, she found a guy that was in on my capture, she found the village where they took me. And they uh, the villagers were going to beat me to death and they were getting a good start on it and a village leader came out and says no, we will not kill him, and so they didn't. They Then took me down to Kempetai, the Japanese military secret police. But I met that fellow he was 90 years old at the time, about four years ago when we were in Japan, and I met him a little old guy but he was the one that saved my life. And he wrote me a poem, I wish you could see it, he gave it to me all framed, it is something about an airplane came over the skies, a pilot Robert was at the control, the plane was on fire and it said.. at the end of it it said.. the first time he was not welcome but he was ardently welcomed today. And I've got that hanging in my living room and it is a very treasured thing. The fellow is 94 now and I think he is still alive. I used to write him at Christmastime and say, hey, thanks a lot, I'm here because of you.

QUESTION: Did you have enough of a conversation with him to say why?

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ANSWER: No, of course I couldn't speak any English or Japanese but I had my little friend, Nouri, from Yokohama with me all the time, and she speaks very good English. No, he said, no we will not kill him and I think he knew they would want me primarily. But his main idea was no we are not going to kill him whether they want him or not we do not take somebody like that and kill him, beat him to death. But they did a lot of them, so this fellow I have his picture at home he saved my life. But the women gave me a good beating and I told my friend Nouri, from Yokohama, that women are the meanest people in the world.

QUESTION: Was this walking through the streets they beat you?

ANSWER: No, they got me cornered? I didn't know where to go. I landed in my chute and I was up in the Chiba Prefecture which is the north part of Tokyo about 80 miles north of Tokyo itself. And I didn't know, I was scared, and I thought if I can just get down to the ocean, Tokyo bay, maybe I can steal a ship.. a steal a boat and I don't know where I'd go. Then I thought if I can get into the mountains, maybe I can get in a cave and hide out but wintertime who is going to feed me. So I walked around a little road and there was a Japanese lady ahead of me and she was frightened of me, she disappeared into a house. And I walked around a road, kind of curved around to that and some fifty years later they took me to that road when I went back to Japan and I took my wife and I walked around that little road where I'd been. But the civilians got quite a crowd. You know you come down in Japan in a parachute and a lot of people see you. There is no hiding so they had this crowd of civilians that gathered and then they had the squad or group of soldiers and they were coming down the roadway and the civilians had me cornered the other way so I gave myself up to the soldiers. And they tied me all up with ropes and then they turned me over to the civilians and that's when I got my first taste of welcome in Japan. They gave me a good beating and that's when they were going to kill me. And that's when this elder, he wasn't elder then, came out and stopped it. I tell you there wasn't a, the group of soldiers that came down they had the lead fellow, was a gunso.. a sergeant, and he had his samurai sword and no weapons among these people at all and I had my 45 and I had it out and I just had that aimed right at him and he didn't falter one step, I tell you, he must have looked into that barrel of that 45 and it looked awful big to him. But I'll give him credit he never broke stride and of course I couldn't pull the trigger either, so I put it back in my holster and they came down and took it. But I often wondered what that sergeant must have been thinking looking into that barrel of a 45. It must have looked as big as a cannon, but he was a brave little kid, maybe not a kid, but they let the civilians have a go at it but you got used to beatings.

QUESTION: So was it mob mentality where they were throwing stuff at you ?

ANSWER: No, mostly with clubs and a lot of them had rakes, garden implements, hoe handles, I remember one little old lady she had a sharp stick. And one thing that saved me everybody was around trying to hit me with something and this little lady in her pajamas you know how the Japanese women.. tied at the.. with their little two toed shoes they wore, and she was jabbing, and she'd jab at my face and I'd cover up my face and she'd jab me some other place and she'd jab my face again and I wanted to kill her I really did. I think if I could have had my 45 back I would have shot that woman. Most of them had sticks or implements or fists, some of. But one thing that saved me I think besides that elderly Japanese man was there were so many of them around trying to get a swipe at me they were getting in each other's way. But anyway after awhile the soldiers broke it up and then this fellow said no we're not going to kill him. So they marched me down a road for awhile I was all tied up and blind folded and kids would throw stuff then clods, and stones and I was, I was, my adrenaline was so high I didn't feel much.

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QUESTION: Again this is a new experience as you described it did you see hatred in their face or was it just mob mentality or what?

ANSWER: Mob mentality more than anything. No I can't say that I saw hatred as such but I'm sure they did because I just bombed their country. But this was at the beginnings of the bombings they hadn't been burned out by that time, and the fire raids weren't until that next March where we destroyed so much of Tokyo. And so but they just.. I was their enemy and an enemy is to be destroyed and where these people were my bombs hadn't come anywhere near them. We had bombed 357, if you'll excuse me but 357 is like me saying Jane Fonda, I don't allow that name in my house either, I just threw that in because I don't allow the name said in my house. Anyway, 357 is just about the same way. But as a matter of fact later on in the war, the next year, the next summer, before the war was over, when Tokyo had been burned out and other cities had been burned out, I.. you didn't see the hatred then in the women. We were working outside when I finally got out of solitary confinement and out to the prison camp, and we were around civilians to some extent and no I didn't, I saw more resignation at the few civilians we were around. We, you've heard of the honey bucket details, no doubt. Well we were tearing down bombed out buildings and making gardens, growing vegetables, daikon, carrots, and this sort of thing. But one of our jobs was to go back into the village there and the honey bucket detail and empty the benjos, the latrines, in the houses and carry it back to the garden for fertilizer. And I had a good friend he lives in Menlo Park, California, now and B-29 navigator and I'm still in contact with him.

We were a team on the honey bucket detail, and we found some of the women back there showed us real kindness. One gave us a bucket of hot water. Which we never.. I went about eight months before I even got a chance to wash my hands or have my clothes off so you know we were filthy and bugs, lice and fleas just always constantly with us. But she gave us a little bucket of hot water and a little piece of soap so Hap and I stripped down right there and tried to scrub each other a little bit and another woman gave us a little few soybeans. We had 7 soybeans apiece.. roasted. And it doesn't sound like much, but when you're starving to death seven little soybeans is a life or death situation so. And they would come and my Japanese isn't very good but something like (Japanese phrase goes here) means pretty soon the war will be over and they would uh, but the men wouldn't loosen up that much, but the women were starting to. They were resigned I think, let's get this war over and they were living pretty poorly too and they were hungry, not like we were, but it was not a good life in Japan at all. So I think when that war was over our troops went in right away and there was no hostility towards them.

QUESTION: Which was the camp you ended up at?

ANSWER: Omori. It was the headquarters camp in the Tokyo area. And they had about 600 people in the camp, but the B-29 people, we were never considered prisoners of war, we were considered war criminals because we had bombed the homeland. And we were not allowed out in the camp. We were in a barracks with a fence around us inside the main fence. We were held separate and always under guard. We were not allowed into the camp with all the other people which were Americans and British, and some Dutch, and people from the Philippines and Wake Island and others. But we were never allowed out into the camp at all and day and night we had armed guards on us because we were war criminals.

In fact I'd been I went out for execution twice when I was in the Kempetai Prison down in Tokyo. And they had interrogated me in bombing civilians and all this you know and then they finally came in and I signed something all in Japanese which was evidently a uh, I confessed to bombing civilians, well I'm sure I did not deliberately. 357 was my target but I'm sure civilians are going to get hurt so they gave me a death sentence, execution. The rest

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of my crew got life imprisonment, but I was the aircraft commander so I got a, I was going to be executed. And I went out twice, and both times why they took me back to my cell and what it was all about I don't know. But I don't know maybe they were.. I don't know if it was a bluff or trying to scare me, that didn't work I was scared enough but I..

QUESTION: When you say you went out twice where did they?

ANSWER: Out of my cell, into the courtyard, back of this prison and that's where they held executions, we heard people get executed out there.

They had a firing squad and I was blindfolded and I stood around there for awhile but there was a lot of talking and a lot of activity around and pretty soon the a.. I was all tied up and they took me back to my cell and I sat there for 2-3 hours. Then they came in and we went out again and I was, the firing squad was there and a.. or soldiers with their guns, they weren't really lined up but they were a squad of some sort with their rifles so. And another hour or so. Well in fact I heard a phone ring someplace, and a.. gees I would have liked to understand Japanese! but I couldn't. But they chatted awhile and pretty soon a car came in that courtyard, a staff car of some sort, and then they took me back to the cell again. And I sat there a couple of hours and then they came in and took my blindfold off, then they came back and took my ropes off and so that's all of it, I never heard anything more. What I think was they were waiting for authority to go ahead with the execution and didn't get it, so.. that's all, I'm just guessing.

QUESTION: Having never having faced anything like that, do you come to a resolve with your life?

ANSWER: Well I sort of.. yes. I..I got, I weighed about 85 pounds when I got out of that Kempetai Cell, and sick.. and beriberi and amoebic dysentery and fleas and lice and starvation diet and you're just a you're a little light headed all the time. Really when I went out to that.. what I thought was my execution I really didn't care that much it just wasn't sinking in.. I just.. let's do it. And for a long time I never thought probably that we were going to get out of that place alive. I knew they'd want us in for interrogation for awhile, and but when they were finished with that I was pretty sure I wasn't ever going to survive it. Once I got out to prison camp the next spring then I thought I had a good chance because the food was a little more, so I put on a few pounds. I think when I got on the hospital ship I was about 90 pounds.. about 95 pounds so I had put on a few pounds. But it was a starvation diet down in solitary confinement days and a little dab of rice, a little rice ball about 3 times a day. And I.. you just a.. I thought maybe I'd go down.. so low and then level off but it wasn't that way, I was just going down down down. And when I finally got out of the cell I was too weak I couldn't stand and when I got out to the prison camp things picked up.

Once we got out there we were a little more optimistic unless we did something. A lot of rules you could break and you never knew what the rules were but if you broke one you got beaten up but. The guards they a..a kendo clubs!. Now kendo is kind of a marshal arts game maybe you've heard of it, like judo. But kendo and they do it with these bamboo clubs about yea and they're pretty clever with those things. Those guards working you all the time with those kendo clubs, beating on you all the time and. So after awhile you get a little fatalistic and say.. if you're going to kill me, let's just do it But out in the prison camp when we're all together I hadn't talked to an American up to that time, even though they are in cells on either side of me at Kempetai but it was pure silence, you couldn't talk to anybody and you had to...

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But you'd uhm.. have to get out in the middle, the cell was a wooden cell with just a hole in the corner and absolutely nothing else in it. And bitterly cold, they had four blankets at night time you could put these blankets over you but they are small Japanese blankets you know and I was 6'1" so very hard keeping a.. my feet got frostbitten, and uh.. it was a miserable life But in the daytime you'd fold the blankets and then you get in the middle of that floor and you sit tailor fashion. I can't do it, I can't sit like that, I just, I thought my back would break in 15 minutes and I just a..I thought I was going to die of that, but.. did it fourteen hours a day. And the guards would up an..you were supposed to sit there looking straight ahead and of course the guard would up and down then you'd lean over a little bit and you'd try to stretch and ohh.. it was misery. Oh the guards they got bored with us too and didn't pay much attention, but it was a miserable life there.

QUESTION: How long were you in that situation?

ANSWER: I was four months in the Kempetai Cell.

QUESTION: Four months what.. and you said fourteen hours a day you had to?

ANSWER: Yeah, sit there in the middle of that floor and after awhile you'd get kinda paralyzed, you get locked into position, so.. I.. it was a when they got uhm.. when we weren't such a novelty anymore they weren't watching us all that much and you would move around and a you know and

QUESTION: Fourteen days of silence, I mean fourteen months of, how long again?

ANSWER: No four months.

QUESTION: Four months of silence, fourteen hours a day. Well all day long.. but?

ANSWER: Well it a.. of course when you get so hungry all you do is think of food, and I thought of every meal I'd ever had in my life and a.. what I used to try to do, was recall childhood events so, well your mind goes back into that. What I would try to do is out of mind experience. Now..this is hard to explain and I never can quite do it but, I tried to.. since you know where Rosalia is, our farm is about eight miles out of Rosalia and when I was a kid. I would try to drive from Rosalia, to the farm. Now you can imagine driving, I'd go across the bridge and I'd go across the Milwaukee Trestle, but to actually sit in the car and out of body and to be.. not just imagining doing it.. but to be actually doing it. It sounds kind of crazy but I would try to do this and once you could get it for just a little while you didn't feel the cold or the hunger. I was actually in a nice summer day driving and could smell the.. fields and the wheat or the plowed ground and al.. You couldn't keep it up very long but once in awhile you could get into that state and it was worthwhile. But I would try to do that and anything kinda keep your mind occupied. You couldn't very well blank out and sit in a daze, cause your mind was always working but as I said mostly it was about angel food cakes that my mom used to make and apple pies, and..

QUESTION: You could actually attain the out of body journey?

ANSWER: For a short time, not the whole trip. I would just for a short time you could suddenly feel this but then you'd be back into reality but that is what I would try and work at. If I could get it for a little longer each time and another mile and it was just something I occupied myself doing, otherwise I might go crazy in that damned cell.

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QUESTION: What about you had your bride back at home, is that something you put out of mind, or was it something?

ANSWER: She a.. when I went overseas, she had a sister living in Seattle and her husband was in the navy so she went to Seattle and moved in with her sister Well I was shot down December 3rd and she got the telegram on December 7th as I recall and there was no, really hope that any of us were alive. It said the airplane was on fire and a wing was coming off. But I was held as missing in action and a.. 'til the war is over before they declare you dead. Anyway if there's no, if they don't see you crash. But she thought I was lost, so she went to business school in Seattle and she got secretarial training but then right at the end of the war she got a job in a bank in Seattle, a pretty good job too, for one of the vice president's. And it was shortly after that the war was over and they liberated us, were she got word that I was back and alive. So she quit her job, I don't think the president of the bank was too happy, well I just hired you, well what do you want me to do, my husband is coming home. But she didn't think we were alive and all.

QUESTION: Have you ever talked about how she dealt with that?

ANSWER: Oh yeah it a.. she just, it was, of course it was war and she knew she was going to be alone so that's why she went to business school to get a trade. She'd been a teacher before the war or before we got married but she didn't want to go back to teaching so she just dealt with it like thousands and thousands of other young widows did. And a.. but then we got when the war was over.. the red cross got lists announced. But to go back to your other question, we didn't think about, we didn't think family as much as you'd think. When we were out to prison camp and most everybody in there was married or quite a few. But we never talked about wives much.. because you were too miserable I think, you were too hungry, too cold and it was such a miserable life and of course any desire for the opposite sex was long gone. You had no feeling whatsoever.. and a.. you just kinda dried up and so.. no one talked around girl friends or wives.

QUESTION: That's where Hollywood misconstrued 'cause that's what they think its all about and you know its interesting I haven't talked to a POW that did talk about that and I'll ask them the question to see if its similar, what did you talk about between other prisoners.

ANSWER: Mostly food.

QUESTION: That's what everyone has said.

ANSWER: I'll bet.

QUESTION: And did you have a specialty that you.. Lauren Schwisow.. it was pancakes, butter and maple syrup and today he has it every morning.

ANSWER: I don't know why but I never thought of meat and potatoes, it was something sweet.. and I thought of pancakes so much stacked with butter running off the sides and hot syrup running all over oh yeah. I can understand that I, it was the sweet things we thought about or a.. and eggs I used to think about eggs a lot but the pancakes yes. I thought a lot of pancakes, candy bars, and sweet things.

QUESTION: I heard of, one was even telling me they exchanged recipes.

ANSWER: Oh I've got at home 6-800. We a.. one fella in our camp a navy pilot, marine pilot, and they'd given him back his Parker 151 pen which is surprising they generally didn't

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give anything back. But we would get rice paper or paper out of tea bags and we'd write and I've got recipes just like you heard, oh yeah, I have them at home now little tiny print.. all the things I'm going to eat.

And a kid named Snuffy Smith, he was an aircraft commander, from Chicago, he is dead now too. Of course Smith, you call him Snuffy, but we sat for hours and hours planning our first meal when we got back to the states together. And his wife would meet him and my wife, Jean, would meet me and we just worked over this meal, man we got it all out, and I've got it written down at home too, but he came back in a ship and I came back in an airplane, so we never got our meal.

We worked on that I tell you and its very important the least little detail has got to be worked out you know. And when you got something to, they came in with maybe a little fish, about like a sardine so you could fight over dividing that fish up if you got two of ya you know, we got the rule, you've probably heard it before, one will divide and the other one will choose. So the guy dividing that tiny fish spends a lot of time and the one choosing measure out micro seconds on that thing. But then they would come in and say well this little fish there will be three of you or five of you on that and then that's tough. You can't one cut and one choose, so you fight over who has the biggest piece. It's kinda funny, but its life or death at the time but you've talked to these other people so.. and I suppose we all say the same thing on it.. food when you're starving to death.. it drives everything else out of your mind.

QUESTION: Do you hurt when you're starving?

ANSWER: No, not a.. I wouldn't say hurt, just I don't know, your mind is on it day and night and all you think about is something to eat.

QUESTION: Energy, I assume that you just?

ANSWER: Yeah, no energy at all. When we were out working.. going back to camp there would be a.. leaving the street there we were right off the number one street from Tokyo to Yokohama still there only there is a freeway above it now, but there was a little hill onto a footbridge that went across a canal into our camp and we used to sit and.. do you think you can make that hill now you'd be thinking you push me up today, tomorrow I push you up, you know and it's a little slope like that but it seemed like Mt. Everest to us sometimes.

QUESTION: What was the.. the second camp they made you work is that right?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: What was the purpose of that camp, I mean what did they have you do?

ANSWER: Gardens, yeah we were.. they told us if you grow things well you'll get part of the vegetables, of course, we never did. What they would do when things got going they'd harvest carrots for example then they'd boil the carrot tops and then they'd strain off the water and give it to us, it'd be green but there would be a little something in it I suppose, but it was boiled carrot tops, we didn't get any of the vegetables. Once in awhile we got soy beans in our rice which is what we got about three times a day was a bucket of rice divided up. We had 36 of us together in this one barracks so they'd bring in the rice and we had a rice dipper and a hot water or a soup dipper and we'd get our bowls out.. and we had one kid named Shorty Armstrong that would put the rice and everybody would watch him and if there was one more grain of rice in that bowl than in my bowl there's trouble.. so food was very

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serious and I do have all those recipes that I've kept all these years and I look at them now and I can't believe food was so important at the time but it was.

QUESTION: That is survival.

ANSWER: Yea, that's survival.

QUESTION: Did the guys joke around at all?

ANSWER: Yeah, yeah we did. This Snuffy Smith and I used to joke around. Some, some people no, would curl up into a ball and withdraw. And we did have a deck of cards in there that the regular prisoners outside our barracks and they had a poker game going but those cards got so worn, you know, that anybody that played cards would know exactly what he had every hand.

And one of the prisoners threw over the wall the new testament so we passed that around. In fact I figured out I made a deal with God that if I would read the New Testament from cover to cover then he'd stop the war. And so I read it, so foggy and very difficult to read and so on but I stayed with that and the war didn't stop so I made another deal. And I said I'll do this again and then you'll stop the war and I didn't get through it other people wanting to have the thing too.

But on Sunday we tried to have a little church service but we had to be very careful, in fact I had arranged a quartet and four of us were going to sing, When They Call the Roll Up Yonder I'll Be There, we thought we were pretty good. But when Sunday came we all got up to sing this and the guard just went berserk. He was on us day and night of course, and he came and whopped us around with his rifle butts and you know he'd knock us down and.. so we didn't sing anymore. I didn't know whether it was our singing or if he didn't like the tune or wanted a different song I don't know but we never tried it again. But he.. the guard went crazy. We thought a.. we just stood there at the end of the barracks you know and everybody, the barracks had a dirt floor with a raised platform on each side about that high and that's where we had. We had about that much space for each of us where our blankets would be folded up in the daytime. We had these rice mats but they we got rid of them they had so many fleas and lice and everything in them that we just wouldn't keep those rice mats around. So the dirt floor there, but we went to the end of the barracks and I thought we were pretty good with this song but someday it didn't go over and we got knocked around.

QUESTION: You talked about having Sunday services, did they do the same thing on the Sunday service?

ANSWER: No what we would do was take turns just reading something out of this little testament we had. Everybody could pick out the passage they wanted. What most people picked out was the one that said, don't care what you eat or drink, you know.. the birds in the field they don't care, we'll be taken care of. Everybody wanted to read that. Don't care what you eat or drink or however it goes and a, but everybody can't read the same one you know, so the birds in the fields they don't care, but we'd pick out a little passage and take turns just reading that but we never had anything much other than that.