

Carl "Bud" Morck

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Question: It sounds like you ended up with a strong liking for that plane.

Answer: Yes, I did. I had more time in that than I did any other airplane, and, and during the war, of course, anybody, if they had around a thousand hours flying time, they had quite a bit of flying time. You know, now you hear about these airline pilots that have got 13,000 hours or 30,000 hours, so on and so forth, and our time was very short. But after all, there was a war going on and we were being rapidly trained and brought into a lot of them, most of them, into combat situations. And -- and then as the war ended, they quit flying and that was the end of it.

Question: Were our pilots adequately trained -- I mean, so-so, adequately, or well trained. 'Cause you had to do it fast.

Answer: Well, I can kind of explain this by saying this. By the time I was commissioned, it took me 13 months to get my commission. The fellow who ended up being my first pilot, John Gracy, he lived in northern Minnesota someplace. He signed up, or became active in the Navy, one month after I did. And I was in the fall of 1942 that I started really getting active in my training, and he started his a month after that. It took him 24 months to get his commission, two years. In that time I had already had my 13 months of instructor duty after completing all my training and so on and so forth. So the pilots that were being turned out by that time were becoming very experienced and had a lot more training. The airplanes had improved. Not particularly the ones I was flying. Because when I started flying PBVs, they were obsolete. They were first assigned to the Navy in about 1933. But it was a good airplane. And we had a lot of them, and it was one of the few airplanes that we had that were something to fight with when the war started. Well the Japanese eliminated a lot of those PBVs because they -- they'd catch those planes out flying, and with their fighters, they could eliminate them in an awful hurry. But the PBVs ended up being very active in the South Pacific in the Black Cat Squadrons which flew at night. And they would fly all night long, from their bases off a -- an aircraft tender, or from a fixed shore base, someplace, and attack Japanese targets a long ways away, in the dead of night, and then they'd fly in singles or pairs or maybe triples. And come home and land just before dawn.

Question: They're a work horse, right?

Answer: Yes.

Question: They're steady as she goes, mmmmm, just --

Answer: Yeah. Anyway, I was, let's see. Anyway, I was -- let's see. When I got through my training at Banana River, I was transferred to the Alameda Naval Air Station, which is across the Bay from Oakland -- San Francisco Bay. And right after we got there, the Japanese surrendered. I can't remember the exact timing of this. But anyway, we hadn't even had more than two or three flights out of Alameda Naval Air Station, making us familiar with the area and so on and so forth, and we knew that our next flight from there would be to Kaneohe in Hawaii. And from there on into the South Pacific, someplace, or maybe on to Japan, if the war was won by then. Anyhow, that's what we were being trained toward at that point. And we were shown that if we were out at sea from NAS, Alameda, and -- and it was -- it became fogged in, we couldn't get back in there and so on and so forth, we would fly north up the coast and then go inland through a gap in the mountains, the coastal range, to Clear Lake in northern California, which was our alternate landing place. And we were taken in there and shown the area once and then flew back out to sea and went back down to San Francisco Bay. And it was kind of funny, something of interest. There were rubber life rafts aboard the airplane, of course, not inflated, all packed

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up. But they had fishing kits in them in case these planes were on patrol and they were forced down at sea and these guys had to survive for a period of time, they could fish. Well, as it turned out, most of these fishing kits in these airplanes that we were flying, had not been examined. The fishing kits were all gone. Because these planes, on their own, they would get up into the northern California area and go into Clear Lake and they'd land, and they'd troll (laughs) -- had the engines on idle, you know, and they'd troll. I never heard anybody catching anything. We never did it. I, you know, not smart enough to do that. But shortly after we were at Naval Air Station, Alameda, they dropped the points that we had to accrue in order to get out of the Navy, you know if we weren't going to stay in, so on and so forth. Well, my whole crew got out. And left, went home. And I had to get another half a point, which I accrued at one quarter of a point a month. So I spent two more months at Naval Air Station, Alameda

Answer: And I have often wondered, I wasn't heading home to anything in particular, I wasn't going to go back to the hotel business that my father was in, and I should have stayed in. I could have had a nice career. And they were dying to have pilots stay in. But I had had enough of flying from A to B to maybe C and then back to A again in the Navy and I didn't want to get out and go into the airlines which would be the logical thing to do at the time. And once again fly from A to B to C, so on and so forth, but flying much more advanced and better airplanes and so on and so forth. But I spent my two months in Alameda and then finally got out and came home. And I was discharged in Olympia, which is where I had -- which I showed as my home when I signed on. And that was my end -- the end of my illustrious -- oh, one more point I'd like to make. At the officers club, at the officers mess, at NAS, Alameda, when we went in for lunch time, we ate cafeteria style. Slid a tray along, by all the food, so on and so forth. And the food was quite good there. And we -- we paid for our meals and they were, oh, for 35 cents I could have a tremendous meal. Anyway, my mother and father had become very interested in southern California

Answer: My dad had a close friend who finally retired in Ojai and was raising avocados. And he, incidentally had been a Navy pilot, too, but a fighter pilot. But this didn't come on until later. But anyhow, my mother was wild about avocados and at that time she couldn't get them here in Washington. They couldn't ship them because they didn't have the shipping containers designed that would keep from bruising the fruit and they would rot and so on and so forth. And at the officers mess for lunch, I could get a half an avocado that was probably that big around and my choice of dressing and it cost a nickle. And I, of course, had to write that to my mother. And I didn't like avocados at that time. Oh, I don't know what was wrong with me. (laughs) And that was the one thing I remember about NAS, Alameda, gee whiz.

Question: So you were at Alameda when the bomb was dropped then, is that right?

Answer: Yes.

Question: And so how did they get that news to all of you guys that were there?

Answer: Well, of course, very shortly after it was dropped, it came through in bulletins that were issued to all Naval personnel, confidential material, but you didn't talk about it, so on and so forth. I don't think I knew anything about the atomic bomb before it was dropped. I don't think I did. That was one of the best kept secrets. And we had no reason to know. And we were only told stuff on a need-to-know basis, so we didn't know anything about it till it was dropped. And one of our very close Japanese friends who ended up being, well, who is now a captain with Japan Air Lines, and we knew as a student in Napa where they had a flight training base for Japan Air Lines after the war, his father was a Kamikaze pilot. And Saki his son, my eyes went like this when Saki told me that his father was a Kamikaze pilot. And he

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said, fortunately the war ended before he graduated from his training. And I said well thank God, I'm glad of that. And Saki looked at me and he said, me, too. (laughs) Wonderful man, very, very intelligent man, and a captain with Japan Air Lines now.

Question: Do you wish you'd got sent overseas, or are you kind of glad, in retrospect, that maybe you didn't have to go over there?

Answer: Well, I'm -- I don't know. At the time I was still gung-ho, you know, like the rest of the fellows. We were going to get over there and we were going to beat them and wind it up and so on and so forth. And I have always explained my existence since as being the thing that would follow the atomic bomb. If that hadn't have won the war for us, then there was always Bud Morck, you know, to send, so I've made my peace with it that way. I -- I really can't say what my feeling was at the time. It was probably, (gestures) whew, like this, you know.

Question: Are you glad you went in?

Answer: Oh, yes, very definitely. I wouldn't want to repeat all that training over again. But there were things that happened that I will never forget. One of my final flight training flights at Hutchinson, Kansas in Stearmans was with a man who, when my friends and I walked out to the flight line to see what our flight schedule was for that day, looked and saw my name next to this instructor's name, I forget what his name was now. Looked at me and said, well, so long, we'll see you at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center. Because this guy had a reputation for washing you out, but good. So we went out, we got in the airplane and we took off. We went up and we flew around for awhile, and he had me do different things, I don't know what. And then he said, okay, I've got it. And in the Stearman, which was a biplane, he rode in the front cockpit, I was in the back cockpit. We were connected by what was known as a gossport. This was a speaking tube that -- it was in front of his mouth and it went back and split and went to my ears. I could not talk to him. So he said, okay, Morck, I've got it. And I thought right away, well, I don't know what he's going to do but I'm going to be prepared for it. So I locked my feet under the seat and I reached down the sides and took ahold of each side of the seat and I thought, okay, wherever this airplane goes, I'm going to go with it, even though I'm belted into the seat, you know, he's not going to shake me out of this airplane. And he immediately pulled the nose up and started to climb and he was climbing in a circle. And he climbed up to about 6000 feet, I guess it was, something like that, and I thought, oh, sure, he's going to put us into a flat spin or something, and you know, I can handle that, no problem. We got up to whatever the assigned altitude that he wanted and he started to level the plane out. Well I still was holding on tight. I was going to stay with that airplane. And he just shoved the stick straight forward and kicked the rudder. Well the airplane went right over on its back and started an inverted spin toward the ground. And at that point he said okay, Morck, you've got it. So I don't know, I had a tremendous faith in the Stearman. I loved that airplane. And the first thing I tried to do was to get my feet out from under the seat and I couldn't. The pull of gravity was in an inverted sense and my feet were locked under there. I couldn't get them out. And I let go on both sides of the seat, my arms went like this (gestures) over my head, and I thought, oh, boy, that looks swell in that mirror. (laughs) And anyway I just reached down, took ahold of the stick, and the airplane stopped spinning of its own accord and the nose kind of dropped and as the nose dropped we picked up air speed. And I just let it go into a dive and I just pulled it out of the dive like this (gestures). I still had my feet stuck under the seat. I should have had them on the rudder pedals but I couldn't get them out. And about that time I was beginning to work them out but we'd already pulled out of the dive. And he said nice recovery, Morck. Okay, let's go down and do some small field work or something. Whoo. I've never forgotten that either. If he'd have known my feet were stuck under that seat, I'd never passed that flight. But he

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couldn't see my feet. But I passed that flight and passed on from the program at Hutchinson. We had, at Hutchinson we had -- what they call a tarmac. It was a great big round circle of asphalt. And depending on which way the wind blew was, decided which way you would approach -- approach this tarmac to land. You didn't have a runway to line up with, you were lined up with the wind that was coming at your face and so on and so forth. Which was decided by a wind sock or something, I don't know. I don't remember how we assumed that. But Kansas, I was there in August and it was rather warm. And this tarmac was surrounded all the way by green grass fields, probably became wheat fields or something, I don't know, but it was green, always green. Well air settles over that green are

Answer: And over the tarmac, which is just blacktop, it got quite warm, the air rose. Well you could come in on a landing approach on this -- over this green grass and the air was sinking, not rapidly but slowly. So you would be coming down very nicely toward the edge of this tarmac and you'd hit the tarmac and the air's going up, like this. And unless you were moving slow enough, you didn't get down on the ground. You'd go all the way across that tarmac and back up in the air again, you know. And it took awhile to learn how to land at that particular place. Anyway, at the staging area or storage area for the airplanes, they had these yellow -- Yellow Perils, as they called them, yellow Stearman, lined up, rows and rows and rows of them. And one day I was assigned one of these airplanes and I think I was assigned what they called an FCS. I was fairly far along in my training, and an FCS was a front cockpit solo. And you got to fly the airplane from the front seat. And they'd put a bag of sand, a hundred pound bag of sand in the back seat and strap it down to balance the airplane. So you could go up and do all the aerobatics you wanted to and everything else and you were all right. Anyhow, I got out and I guess I was in this airplane and I hadn't left the ground yet. And another fellow went out to do an FCS in one of them. Happened to be in the line that was the next one in front of mine and up a ways. And as I say, here are all these airplanes just lined up in a line, you know, and there's a tremendous symmetry to it. Well, the flight captain, our flight chief, plane captain was his title, an enlisted man. He would come out and stand in front of your airplane, and he would motion you out of the line, you come out straight, and then he'd give you the signal to lock a brake and come on around like this and be in so you could taxi out between the lines. Well, he gave the signals to this fellow that I was watching who was a little ahead of me, I mean, time wise he was ahead of me in taxiing out. And he brought him out of the line, gave him a clamping signal like this and come on, and just as he did this, this kid hit the brakes, and he did it so quickly and so hard that airplane went (gestures) like this. Well here are all these yellow airplanes, tremendous symmetry to this view, and here's one with a tail pointing straight at the sky and this kid sitting up there and the propeller had just finished going chunk, chunk, chunk into the asphalt and the engine quit, you know. Oh, I don't know what happened to him, but probably not good, whatever it was. (laughs) Things like that kind of stick in your mind, you know. But I -- it was quite a sensation to go from, as I was saying, cadet, aviation cadet, which was lower than dirt, to suddenly being commissioned, and all of a sudden here are all these enlisted men saluting you, you know. Didn't even know how to answer a salute properly. And -- and that was quite a change. And then of course there were multiple changes in your feelings and your attitude and your ability and so on and so forth as you went through flight training, very interesting.

Question: Well, thank you very much.

Answer: My pleasure.