

War Era Story Project 2012

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When I was in high school, World War II was in progress. I thought at that time that I did not have to worry, as it would be over by the time I was out of school. That did not happen (War still on). During my last year of high school, I became the school bus driver for our school because all the men had joined or got drafted.

I graduated from high school and I wanted to train for pilot, flying a bright star plane. Navy, of course. I was told the only way was to join the service and ask for pilot training school. So I joined the Navy so I could then ask to go to pilot school training. I was sent to basic training school to become a pilot. Well of course this did not happen. Once you are in the service, you do what they tell you to do. So, off to Chicago for basic training. When I finished basic training, I found out that the only way to get in Naval Air Force was to go to radio gunner training. No pilot training was available. So, I took that training, as it was the only way to get to flight position. They said there might be an opening. I spent the following months training as an aerial gunner radio man. I was assigned upon graduation to flight fighting squadron. I could not believe it, but out of all the pilots across the United States you were assigned to one only, and he also was from Flint, Michigan, my home town. We flew together in a S B 2 C' Naval Dive Bomber; he the pilot and I the radio man and gunner.

Then I transferred to the Naval air craft carrier "Enterprise." The Japanese were bombing and defending Okinawa; so our air craft carrier also was sent to the Okinawa Area. By the time we arrived, the United States Marines had taken Okinawa, and we flew off the airport carrier on the southern half of the island. The Japanese still had air craft carriers and fighting planes in the area. So we encountered fighting their aircraft and bombing in the northern half of the island, which we and the Marines countered. Also, the Japanese had their planes in the area and we had to contend with them. At this time, they started their own suicide flights on our Navy ships. We also were able to stop their attacks on our planes and ships in this area. We held the Island of Okinawa and stopped their attacks on our other positions in the area that we had taken over. This was the time they started their suicide flights and attacks on our naval planes and ships. We flew missions against their forces of ships and territories in the area besides daily combat missions against their other positions in the area to get them out of the area.

We drove them out of the other islands, so the marines and other forces could move in and take over the territory they held. At one time, we of course had the Japanese shooting at us. We heard on the radio that someone has to go down and bomb them. (Are they crazy?) Then came the reply! We will go down and get them. And it was our plane. Oh no!!! We got them with a bomb. I never expected that. We did over twenty combat flight bombing of their held territory and fighting their aerial forces. We, of course, lost many of our forces but we managed to get them more and more out of the area; with the marines and army personnel taking over the area.

On one of the flights off the carrier we did not have enough air coming at us. Usually, the carrier would turn into the wind to help the movement of air across the deck. It failed to do so, and as a result we did not get enough air under the wings to keep us flying. So we ended up in the water in front of the ship. Luckily, the ship missed us as we floated on out with our life jackets. One of the destroyer escorts came by and picked us up. But now we had to get back on our carrier (the Enterprise). They ran a cable between the destroyer and our carrier. We had a vest cable attached to the metal line and rode the line between the destroyer and the air craft carrier. Thus, no one was hurt or injured except for the muscle strain riding the vest belts and back of the carrier. We flew again the next day, as nothing had happened.

Each flight was basically the same: Join the other planes and see if you could spot one of their anti-aircraft guns. While we were flying, I was listening to the conversations over the radio. You would hear one of the pilots from the plane say "anti gun location spotted," asking permission to dive and destroy. I would say to myself, "there goes another poor son of gun again into a dive to try and drop a bomb onto a jap machine gun." After about four more planes going down suddenly, I heard another request. Again, I thought, "there goes another poor son-of-a-gun into a perilous attack." Much to my surprise, all of a sudden, permission granted was again coming over my ear phones. At that time I suddenly felt us turn over and head down. I thought "oh my god" here we go again. May the Lord help us and come out of this again. As you know, three or four of their guns concentrated on your plane. We made the dive and came up without getting shot down.

Upon getting back to the landing later, we did notice we had hits on our plane. But luckily, none in a vital area of the plane or either of us getting hit bodily. We managed to destroy the gun and area with our bomb. Again, we started the dive at about 12,000 feet and came out at two or three, and flew away with only a few bullet hits, but none in a vital spot. At one time, while the Japanese were firing at us, a bullet went: One in back of me and one across my stomach, got part of the life jacket. At the time, I did not realize until we landed how close it was. Until we also saw more shots on the plane.

I was discharged out of the Navy April 7, 1946.