

Interviewer: And I can cut anything you want me to edit out. If you want me to turn it off just say turn that thing off and I will not be a problem. Alright start over again tell us your full name when and where you were born and what branch of the service you were in.

Moore: My name is Riley Moore I was born December 9, 1916 Blakely Georgia.

Interviewer: And what branch of the service were you in?

Moore: I was drafted into the service at Fort Benning Georgia. There I took the examination for cadet training and I was 6 months over the age limit for cadet training. I couldn't get a waiver you know age waiver to become a pilot. So they sent me to Keisha Field in Biloxi Mississippi for classification for the air force the U.S. Army Air Force at that time it was called U.S. Air Force not the Air Force today was part of the U.S. Army you were at that time. At that time I stayed there and was sent to Stapleton Field in Denver Colorado for classification. There I qualified to become a Tail gun on the Billy Mitchell B25 which is a medium bomber with a crew of six and I was a tail gunner.

Interviewer: What did the tail gunner do?

Moore: The tail gunner was the assistant observer he manned two machine guns by remote in the aircraft. There was a radio gunner he had two guns one on either side of the cabin and the flight engineer engineer bomber gunner had a turret on top of the gun. Then you had the pilot and the co-pilot the navigator bombardier so that was a total of six members on the plane. I took advanced training area gunnery training at Fort Myers Florida. And then I was during that time the 477th was activated in Selfish Field Michigan. And when I joined them they had moved them to Gardener Field which is a part of Fort Knox just 30 miles south of Louisville Kentucky. Then we went into different extended training and during that time I counted a lot of German POWs that was sent over that was captured that did detailed work around Gardener Field and Fort Knox. During that period of 1944 General BO Davis Colonel BO Davis Jr. was commander of the 99th fighter group. They had gone over to the European Theatre and fought and flew cover for the bombers over there in the European Theatre war. Then they brought them back after the European Theatre was over and joined us. At that time all the services was segregated. So we made the change from 477th bomber group to 477th composite group consisting of fighters and medium bombers. And we were there in training under General BO Davis Jr. until we received orders. During that time you know Pearl Harbor was bombed. And we were assigned to go to the Aleutian Islands to fight and strafe submarines and sea blow into the Japanese. But General Doo Little didn't let us get that far because they had dropped the bomb at Hiroshima.

Interviewer: Right

Moore: And so we were headed for the Aleutian Islands and we were had gotten all prepared ready for combat and our orders were changed to remain in the states.

Interviewer: So they didn't send you anywhere at all you stayed where you were?

Moore: We stayed yes I was very much disappointed because I was ready and prepared to go.

Interviewer: Right

Moore: And serve my country. But we did have an opportunity to prepare for service. So many of us fellow Americans had done before us. I missed it very much I missed it so very much. But I got an experience out of it because it made more of an understanding impression of me about our country. All of my education but it meant quite a bit to me to be a member of the armed services for our country the United States of America.

Interviewer: What was your training like? Do you remember much about your training what did that all involve?

Moore: Well it involved how to operate those machine guns remote control and also how to remain calm and become a team. Looking out for each other while you were air borne and it was very very very nice very nice.

Interviewer: What were some of the things they tried to tell you about how to stay calm?

Moore: Well for one thing about it all you might see an enemy aircraft approaching don't get excited you know how that you've got other crew members to cover the areas what they call the blind spot on the aircraft. How you go as far as your range of movement your guns was moving back and forth up and down. The others take over and it was quite an experience to become a team member and live together because my life depended on his life or their life. And so you had to work as a team and also they wanted me to stay in as an instructor.

Interviewer: Really

Moore: Yeah but I

Interviewer: You didn't want to do that?

Moore: No I refused that.

Interviewer: You said that you all worked as a team a lot outside of the aircraft and outside of the training the people that were in the plane with you the rest of your crew did you all spend a lot of time together? And were those your close friends the people that you did stuff with?

Moore: The relationship was so good and I still keep in touch with some of my former crew members. Those who are still alive I think we've got about three including myself still alive. I wouldn't trade it for anything in the world. It was just an experience the disappointment came when they told me I was too old and I couldn't get an age waiver to become a pilot a commissioned officer. See I was a noncom which was a sergeant noncom officer. That was the one disappointment that I had.

Interviewer: That you didn't get to be a pilot.

Moore: Uh huh

Interviewer: I can understand that they won't let me be a pilot either. Since you never got to do service overseas what was your training maneuvers like here what was involved? You were obviously on a plane that had guns on it and that was a big part of it.

Moore: Yes we went to outside of South Carolina

Interviewer: I think I know where you're talking about but I can't think of the name of it.

Moore: North of Savannah Georgia but anyway we went over water training to assemble and fire our machine guns at targets there they set up. So we would have first had experience of an enemy vehicle or ship or whatever submarine we had that training and everything. It was fun we had to fly three hours and then come back and refuel and reload and go back. We stayed there for three weeks in this area here training. And then we also had different formations for our aircraft with a blanket spread out like 24 planes wide 24 planes deep. And you could imagine with you dropping each plane dropping 20 or more bombs there would be a whole blanket area just covered wipe out everything. And also we had on that aircraft we had the 20 millimeter cannon we fired that too and it was fun it was really fun I enjoyed those. But I didn't want to stay in there and make a career out of it.

Interviewer: I don't blame you I do not blame you.

Moore: But it was nice I enjoyed it. And we had aerial photo training.

Interviewer: Really

Moore: Like we'd fly say in an area say a railroad line or another airfield we had photos on the guns and you would picture all of those things in sight of that the pilot the bombardiers and the other gunners too. Then we came back and studied those pictures after they were developed.

Interviewer: Wow that's interesting because that's what my dad did in Vietnam. He was the photographer in the plane. You said that while you were at Fort Know.

Moore: Montgomery Field

Interviewer: Montgomery Field that you had contact with prisoners of war German prisoners of war. What was that like first of all what kind of contact did you have with them?

Moore: Well nothing just ordinary them being around the area on the base there and they didn't speak English. They had the guards with them though we couldn't go in there and fraternize with them. But speak to them and they'd nod their head something like that. In fact they had better treatment than we had they could go everywhere around there. They were very nice they were taken well care of they had good food good places to sleep and they weren't overworked you know what I mean. But they were nice none of them were hostile. In fact I'm sure quite a few of them were able to come back into this country and become citizens. You know it's true.

Interviewer: That's the wonderful thing about America.

Moore: Thank you and one of the saddest things about it too.

Interviewer: You said the prisoners weren't over worked what was their job?

Moore: The cleaning maintain the buildings, grounds, washing vehicles with the infantry mechanics and stuff like that different odd jobs.

Interviewer: Just the stuff that needed to be done?

Moore: Yeah landscaping and what have you.

Interviewer: I wouldn't mind that job. What was your day to day life like here stateside while the war was going on? What did you all do in your free time?

Moore: Well we went to the noncom club and took trips out different place or went home visited parents' families you know like that. Came back

Interviewer: Just kind of running around a little bit.

Moore: Of course we did have to do KP. We did KP and all like that so that was all nice and all.

Interviewer: What was the food like? I bet it was a whole lot better than it was than in the heat.

Moore: The food was very nice and everything but we had good chefs and everything. And being air force they said they spoiled us by the extra things we had. It was very nice I enjoyed it. I enjoyed it so very much.

Interviewer: How often did you all get to go on your excursions out in the town or home or wherever?

Moore: You could go every week once a week.

Interviewer: Wow that's more than they let them do now I think.

Moore: Oh yeah but if you weren't engaged in training or something you could go. Weekend passes we called them get weekend passes.

Interviewer: Right how did you all get news updated news about what was going on overseas?

Moore: Through our commanding officers base officers then our headquarters in Rhode Island.

Interviewer: So it wasn't a whole lot of this touch and go information what you got was pretty much guaranteed this is true.

Moore: Right yeah well it was a good experience I wanted to go so very much because I had practiced so hard trained so hard and everything. And wanted to see what it was all about but it was quite an experience.

Interviewer: Between the years the time between when you got your orders to stay stateside and when you were discharged what all did you do in there? Did you continue your training or did you apply for discharge?

Moore: No just waited for my seniority date to come up and did a whole lot of duties around the base KP again. And of course and the other thing although I was a sergeant we still had little things to do. But it wasn't bad and then we started disassembling things back to peace time status for the group you

know. Finally they said you can go you don't want to stay in as an instructor. So I went to Fort McPherson there again in Georgia for my discharge which was March 1946.

Interviewer: Right after you were discharged what did you do? I'm pretty curious how did you end up in Centerville of all places how did you end up here?

Moore: That's not in

Interviewer: I know that's not in the questions I'm curious.

Moore: In Birmingham after being discharged and going back home while I was in service I took the GI bill of rights for schooling for a career. Took the test and everything and passed so I went and became a watch repairer and jewelry maker go in business for myself. Of course going back to Birmingham go to the veterans administration office with my credentials and everything I was sent to watch repair school there in Birmingham. And I was denied admittance so I went back to the veterans administration office and he looked over his book location of differ GI schools for watch repair and I ended up with one in Cleveland Ohio. And of course that didn't pan out and veteran's administration closed that school. In the meantime I applied for a job at United Airlines and that was in August 1946 and I stayed there until 1981 which was my discharge.

Interviewer: So you retired with United?

Moore: Yeah I retired from United yeah after 35 years with the company. That is where I met my sweet and lovely wife. And had a family this is her home Centerville and came here.

Interviewer: Wonderful

Moore: And I've enjoyed it ever since.

Woman in the background: And his family is in Birmingham it made us close to both families.

Interviewer: That's true it's not far to Birmingham from here.

Moore: Its 195 miles from my house to my sister's house. It's three hours' drive from here.

Interviewer: Very good well thank you so much for this.

Moore: You be careful going back with that to school.

Interviewer: I sure will and I will send you

Tape ended