

The interview subject today is Mr. James R. Krantz of Clarksville, TN, formerly of the Pacific Theater of World War II. If you could, take me a little bit through the Depression years prior to the time that you joined the Air Corp.

Mr. Krantz: We were raised in Montgomery County approximately four miles from here and we were raised on joining farms. We went to school together back in the early 1930's; middle 30's. We started dating when we were in our teens. We were married in January 1942, in St. Louis, Missouri. I was up there working at Curtis Wright Aircraft when the war broke out. We were already engaged and I couldn't come home because they had froze me to the job. Her mother and my mother brought her to St. Louis and we got married there at her grandmother's home on January 25, 1942. I continued to work at Curtis Wright until December of 1942 and went into the Army at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri. A week later, I was on a troop train heading for St. Petersburg, Florida, for basic training and was informed the entire troop train was transferred to the Air Corp. So we went to St. Petersburg and did twelve weeks of basic and during that period of time I was singled out for airplane mechanic and also flight status. After basic training, we went to Amarillo, Texas, for twelve weeks of airplane mechanics school on B-17's. I finished that in August of 1943 and went to Seattle, Washington, for twelve weeks advance training on the B-17. There was a class of about thirty of us at that time. That was finished. During that period of time if you made above 90 in your schooling you could live off post. I lived off post up there and my wife came up and spent about two months with me there. After the twelve weeks was up my class started shipping out and B-17 outfits were headed for Germany. All of them were gone but me and I figured maybe they had lost my records so I went down to see why I wasn't shipped out. They told me that I had been transferred to the B-29's which started coming off the assembly lines at that time. I was there for another twelve weeks for B-29 training.

What was your thought when you first saw the B-29?

Mr. Krantz: Well at that time it was the biggest thing we had. The B-17 was one of the best bombers we ever had. It had been rugged and it was going to fly on one edge that we flew them for and on one edge coming in off training simulations. All of our trainings for the first three phases after we started as a crew was in the 17's; until we got the B-29 in the last phase of our training and wound up navigation on the B-29. It was entirely different from anything. During this period of time after we did our training and the way we were training and what have you we pretty much knew where we were headed for; it would be the Pacific. The B-29 was geared for that, long range. We wound up the training there and we went from there to Denver, Colorado, Berkley Field, and went to an Army school for the B-29. I went from there to Z_____ field and went to an electrical school for the B-29 gunnery. From there we went to Clovis, New Mexico, and that is where we formed a crew. We started forming a crew there. Crews were shipped to different places. I went to Pratt, Kansas. Some of them went to Great Bend, Herrington, and Lincoln, Nebraska. I went to Pratt and we trained as a crew at Pratt, Kansas. That's where I met all my crew from all different, the pilot, co-pilot, navigator and all that.

When was this? What were the approximate dates?

Mr. Krantz: The spring of 1944.

So the crew formed up in the spring of 1944. We need to back up just for a moment here; just for the record, can you state your full name and ma'am you too and your date of birth?

Mr. Krantz: James R. Krantz, June, 20th, 1922.

Mrs. Krantz: Mildred Marshall Krantz and I was born on October 26, 1923.

So at the time prior to Pearl Harbor, now you just came out of the Depression, I imagine like everybody else around here that there was no money and nobody had anything and you managed to survive. During this time did your family pay attention to the radio news and the newspapers?

Mr. Krantz: We didn't have a radio.

Mrs. Krantz: Very few people had radios. Televisions hadn't come into bid yet.

Do you remember ever reading in the newspaper about things that were happening in Germany and Japan in the 1930's?

Mr. Krantz: If we got a newspaper it would be old news when we got one. But we lived back on the farm in the country.

Mrs. Krantz: We lived way back, close to the river.

Mr. Krantz: In 1941 the government came out with a technical training, aircraft training; sheet metal school. They had on in Clarksville. At that time when that came out, I was working out in the farm for .50 cents a day. I was riding four miles on a bicycle on a gravel road before daylight and back after dark and made .50 cents a day. Before that when we were going to school, we walked four miles each way to school. We didn't have school buses and we went to a country school. I graduated from the 8th grade. That is as far as I went in school. I started out with the aircraft sheet metal school and went twelve weeks in the evening from 4-12 at Clarksville High School. I rode my bicycle from here, down there in the afternoon and back for twelve weeks and worked on the farm during the day. I was guaranteed a job when that was over. My job wound up being at Glen L. Martin Co. in Baltimore, Maryland. I went up there and stayed twelve weeks and a friend of mine that had gone to school went to St. Louis, Missouri. He went to work for Curtis Wright. I got the word from him that if I could come out there that I could work out there. So I quit Maryland and went to St. Louis. This was in October of 1941. I stayed at home a week between up there and St. Louis. I went to St. Louis and worked on the graveyard shift out there from 12 o'clock at night to 7 o'clock in the morning. I was working there when we got married and worked there until I went in the service in December 1942.

When Pearl Harbor first happened, how did you first hear about it?

Mrs. Krantz: We had a radio then.

Mr. Krantz: I was in St. Louis at the time.

Mrs. Krantz: My dad, I don't know where they got it or how they got it or anything else because if you didn't raise what you ate then you didn't have it. When you were fortunate enough to get sugar you got as much as you could and made it last as long as you could. My mom and dad, when our sugar ran out, they would puncture sugar maples and catch the stuff in a bucket and my mom would make sugar out of it.

Mr. Krantz: I was working graveyard shift and this buddy of mine; I was rooming with his aunt and uncle in St. Louis. Our regular routine on Sunday was that I would get in about 8 or 8:30 and he was working on Saturdays and Saturday nights were my Saturday. I would take a shower and we would go to church. Well on this December 7th we went to church and across the street was a Whitecastle hamburger; we would always go there to have a Sunday lunch. Two doors down was the St. Louis Theater and we would go there and watch the movie. On this Sunday we did the same routine, we got to the St. Louis Theater before the movie started and they had the news on the screen and it told about Pearl Harbor being bombed just an hour or two before that. That was on December 7th. When I went back to work of course I heard it on the radio the next morning when the President declared war on Japan. The rest of them were already working; my buddies were. That night when I went to work, the Army had taken over Curtis Wright. They were sleeping in the hallways in the downstairs in the basement. The first floor had guards all over, everywhere.

Did you have the idea though that somebody was prepared for this; that somebody had a good idea that this was going to happen because of how quickly they were able to respond?

Mr. Krantz: Yes, we hadn't given it any thought much until then; we knew things were happening all over. It was based on the information that we had that we were building airplanes for England; Great Britain. We were training pilots for Great Britain. We knew that. The P-40's that we were building in St. Louis at Curtis Wright was going to the CBI I guess it was; the China India Burma to fight the Japanese with the Flying Tigers. We weren't surprised that we were going to war; of course we didn't know where we were going. I think we were surprised that the Japanese were coming into us. We were geared up to go to Germany.

Initially did you have a deferment because of your job at the plant?

Mr. Krantz: I got two deferments. I was froze on the job; I got two deferments. The second deferment ran out around the 15th of December. The draft board was closed for the holidays and the recruiting office was all closed for the holidays. I wanted to go to the Navy; is where I always wanted to go. But when my deferment ran out I got notice from my draft board out there to report and I did. During this period of time I tried the Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard or whatever but all of them were closed. There wasn't anything I could do but go to the draft board at Jefferson Barracks to the Army. But I was transferred to the Air Corp.

So you ended up kind of where you wanted to be or where you thought you wanted to be.

Mr. Krantz: Well I really wanted to go to the Navy because I was raised on the river down here. Me and my dad did a lot of fishing; commercial fishing for about three years in the 1930's. I like the water. I didn't ever care too much about flying. I never had the desire to fly. I don't know why but I didn't. It just wasn't my idea. I didn't dread it or nothing. It just wasn't one of my dreams.

Did you end up liking it any better later on?

Mr. Krantz: Oh yeah. After I got started in it and after I got in the crew and I didn't fly until our crew was formed.

This was the crew of the "American Maid? That was your....?"

Mr. Krantz: Right, that was my plane.

American-maid, B-29 bomber for the Army Air Corp pictured in this photo before the fateful flight that saw them shot down on a mission to bomb Tokyo: 1st Lieutenant Harrison Whittie.

Mr. Krantz: He was our navigator.

Now 1st Lieutenant Harrison Whittie.....

Mr. Krantz: He was a bombardier.

.....recognized for saving the life of fellow crewmen, Sergeant Tim Krantz,
Take me from the time your crew was first formed until you first deployed to overseas.

Mr. Krantz: We went from Clovis, New Mexico, to Pratt, Kansas, to do our training. We trained there through early spring. I think maybe early March of 1944 until October 1944 and went overseas. We landed at Saipan and had just enough runway to land on didn't have enough to take off. We were there until well about November 24th was when we made our first raid on Tokyo. We had set up shop over there and living quarters and everything. We got gasoline enough on the island to take off. The Marines were still fighting when we landed over there. They were fighting on the north end of the island. The engineers had gotten enough runway for us to land on and we started from there. November 24th we made our first raid on Tokyo. I was in the third crew of the first squadron of the first group that went over there on the number three ship. We had the alternate bomb site. Each crew had two bomb sites, the lead plane and either the second or third plane. We flew in V formation and there were only two bomb sites in each squadron; in case one got knocked out the other one could take over. We were Pathfinders. We were almost ready to get on the bomb run and Tokyo Rose was on the radio. This was around noon time, Tokyo time. She said, "It was impossible for the Americans to ever bomb the homeland of Japan because they had wiped out the Air Force in Manchuria. I don't know what Air Force was in Manchuria all of the B-29's over there had left and came to the South Pacific because they couldn't fly from where

they were at to Tokyo. She was still on the radio when we started dropping bombs on November 24th.

November 24th, 1944; right as she was still on the radio telling them that that couldn't happen.

Mr. Krantz: That's right. We were flying at anywhere from 30-35 thousand feet depending on the wind velocity and what have you. We ran into a lot of high winds which we didn't know about. We made one raid. We got on the bottom run and we cruised at 200. We were cruising at 200 air speed and had a head wind of 183 mile an hour on a bomb run. That was some of the typhoon winds that we never heard about until we got over there and found it. Our efficiency ratings on those raids were something like 20-25%. I made seven missions. On my seventh mission I got hurt in January; January 3rd. On January 9th, General Curtis Lemay was transferred in there as General of the 20th Air Force. He was there through one raid and he saw what actually was happening; the winds and efficiency. He pulled his staff together and he said, "We will never win the war at this rate! We don't have enough men and we don't have enough planes." "It's too heavy of a win for this; we are going to have to do some refiguring." I got hurt on January 3rd and on January 27th, somewhere in that area; they made their first fire raid on Tokyo. What he had done, he pulled all the guns out of the 29's, except the tail guns, we had a tail gunner and the other gunners would observe us. Instead of going in at 30,000 we would go in as single planes at night, we had a pathfinder and nine seconds later one on the right and nine seconds later one on the left. We were bombing off of the fire. The first fire raid they made over Tokyo they burnt out 17 square miles and killed 100,000 Japanese.

Now you said that you got hurt on January 3rd?

Mr. Krantz: January 3rd, yeah.

Can you describe that incident?

Mr. Krantz: On the December 21st raid which was my 6th raid we got a slight hit. But the top gunners blister blew out. The plane was pressurized. He had an 18-inch blister and he said with the swivel seat right under it he could touch his head within that blister and he controlled his guns from below. His blister was blown off and the pressure shot him up in that blister. The blister wasn't big enough for him to get through. He had on a flight suit and all of that and we had parachutes so we had to pull him back down out of that hole on that opening; the pressure was so great. It's just like sticking a nail in an inner tube or a balloon. All the pressure comes out at one time. That's what happens in the 29 when the pressurization was punctured. So we pulled him back down and he got skinned up a little bit. When I seen this I helped pull him down. I thought, "Well if that were my blister I would have been gone." My blister was 30-inches in diameter. We didn't make another raid until January 3rd and during that period of time over Christmas and New Year's me and a friend of mine by the name of Milton Dickman got out and picked up enough stuff from salvage and begged stuff from the parachute department and

what have you and I made a safety strap to wear. I could wear that safety strap and be anchored to the plane in case my blister blew out. I had a harness, like a belt with galleasses, fastened to the belt front and back and it looped in the back. It just had the waste and the shoulders and the static line coming from the belt. I took the nails from the bomb crate and put one on top and one on the bottom going to the main eye beam going down to the plane under the floor and that is what I ran this static line through. I couldn't find a ____ buckle. I did find one of these buckles that the tighter you pull, the tighter it gets. That is the only thing I could find so I adjusted up my strap about two foot and had it to where it would stop me at the point where I could cover my position; the area I was supposed to cover which was about almost 180 degrees on the ____ side from the nose to the tail. We got a direct hit with anti-aircraft and also a fighter at 29,500 feet. We had 247 holes I believe it was in the plane. My blister was blown off during that period of time and we were on the bomb run. When my blister got blown off, the pressure hit me and pulled the slack out of the adjustable buckle and _____ about the last 4 or 5 inches of the line got tangled up and I was on the outside.

You were on the outside of the plane?

Mr. Krantz: I was; I tugged my gun site at it but mounted on the mount was three 3/16th inch bolts and I shared those bolts and took that sack with me. It dislocated my shoulder and me and that gun site fought that pressure. My oxygen mask came off. We were on pure oxygen. We always went on pure oxygen for an hour before we got to the target because you had better vision and everything for it; full alert. I guess you get sort of high on pure oxygen after an hour. But any way that was our ruling we would go on pure oxygen an hour. I lost the oxygen and my gloves came off, my helmet came off. I had a little 45-holster fastened to that belt at the bottom that went around my shoulder. My .45 came out of my holster, but my holster stayed. Well at 39,500 feet and 38 below zero you are only supposed to live 15 seconds at the most. So they were on the target and we had 300 fighters in the air against us at that time. They didn't fool with trying to get me back in until after they got off of the target. We got off of the target and this Lieutenant Whittie and the central fire man, Earl Hart, and Lieutenant Crow, the co-pilot, took on the chore of pulling me back in. The only thing they could get a hold of was that shoulder holster.

The only thing holding you outside that aircraft is that strap?

Mr. Krantz: Yes the strap.

And the static line?

Mr. Krantz: Yes the static line.

So you are just suspended outside of the plane?

Mr. Krantz: Flapping, yes.

Flapping back and forth and it's 38 below zero?

Mr. Krantz: We were cruising at 200 at a 150 mile an hour tail wind at that time.

150 mile an hour tail wind, your cruising at 200 miles an hour, you're in 38 below for how long?

Mr. Krantz: Fifteen minutes. They got me back inside finally and after they got a hold of me and got me part of the way in that strap that was holding me in cut where it had sawed across that blister and cut. They said it broke in two as they got a hold of me and brought me back in. During this period of time my flight surgeon was flying on my wing and ____ magazine had gave him a camera that morning and said, "If you see any pictures, take us a picture." He caught a picture of this when it happened all the way through it. When he got in that night he reported to the controllers at ____ and the "American Maid" came in and ____ because him being a medical man knew that you wasn't supposed to live but a short period of time. They got me back inside and put an oxygen mask on me and I came to. The whole time I came to they gave me a shot or morphine to knock me out to keep me from going into shock. They did that until we got back to Saipan.

What were the effects of 38 below at 200 miles an hour and I imagine that adds a little bit of wind chill to that?

Mr. Krantz: I was frozen over 90% of my body. All I had on was a lightweight light cover on me.

Ninety percent of your body was frozen?

Mr. Krantz: Yes, with frostbite. That is the only physical damage I got (points to ring finger and pointer finger on left hand) was this and this. My bones are deteriorating even now. My surgeon that practiced in Alaska for twelve years, he is the one that made out the report in 1991. I fought the VA for that long. I came out with 50% disability and within six months they cut it to 10%. I fought with them on that and finally got it up to 20% and didn't get anything done until 1991. I went to a doctor in Philadelphia. My son-in-law was an investigator for a law firm up there and he used to work for the VA. He worked for them for seventeen years. He came down here after he married my daughter and he saw my record and said, "You are due more money than that. If you follow my instructions we will get it." So he made me an appointment with a doctor in Philadelphia and took that report plus the reports he had this doctor that practiced in Alaska. He was the one that had given him the record; it's on the record that my bones are deteriorating. He knew because he had practiced medicine in Alaska for twelve years and he knew what frostbite was. So as of 1991 I wound up 100% disability.

The flight surgeon, did he actually get a picture of this?

Mr. Krantz: Yeah, I've got the original photograph if you will excuse me for a minute I will show it to you.

We're going to pause here just for a moment.

Interviewer to Mrs. Krantz: If you could tell me that part again; all the bullets that hit that plane was over 200 bullets that hit the plane.

Mrs. Krantz: Well three of them hit the tail of it. One hit the tail gunners which was Don Wilson. His name was Don Wilson from Illinois. One of them hit his ring and cut his finger off. He found his finger and buried it but he never did find his ring. One hit his parachute he was sitting on and one went through his helmet. Can I tell you something Pat? God had him in his arms when he was hanging. There is no way he would be back here if he wasn't. If he hadn't of been in Gods arms, he wouldn't have been here. I believe that 100,000%.

I'm inclined to agree with that.

Mrs. Krantz: You know he was, you know he was. He lived fourteen minutes and forty-five seconds longer than it was even possible.

How long was it before he told you about any of this?

Mrs. Krantz: Then when anything happened the government would send somebody with a telegram to you. They didn't send you a telegram, forget it. But I had already known it before....

Mr. Krantz: This is the original picture that you got a shot of a while ago. This is a copy of the original. I got the original picture which is that size.

Let's try to get a good shot of both of these here.

Mr. Krantz: Colonel Stuart P. Wright signed the original picture because it was classified; all this down at the bottom. He signed that so I could bring it back with me from overseas.

Let me try to focus as well as I can here. That's the aircraft. I'm going to try to zoom in and try to focus as well as I can here. Right here, you see where the blister is gone. There is Mr. Krantz. That is his leg hanging down on the outside of the aircraft. You see the leg and there is the boot right there. Let me try to get a little bit closer here.

Mr. Krantz: That bulk is that gun site.

The bulky part, that is the gun site?

Mr. Krantz: Yeah, see the heavy part right there is the gun site. That is me and the gun site together. It was hanging by a cable; an electrical cable.

Now the tail right there, is that where Mr. Wilson was?

Mr. Krantz: Yes.

This aircraft received how many bullet holes again?

Mr. Krantz: 247 holes.

Three of them hit you in various places and you lost a finger and that was it.

Mr. Krantz: No, the finger was caused by frostbite. The tail gunner was the one that got a finger shot off.

So that was Mr. Wilson, he got hit three times?

Mr. Krantz: One landed on the parachute he was sitting on and one landed just through his helmet and one went through his hand and cut his finger off.

You said he buried that finger. Where did he bury it at?

Mr. Krantz: After he got back to Saipan. They never did find his ring.

What do they do with an aircraft after it gets hit 247 times?

Mr. Krantz: Oh they repaired it. You can see one of the holes right there. That was the biggest one I think, except the blister. They repair them and patched them and what have you back on the ground.

Now this is signed by Stuart Wright, Colonel, Air Corp.

Mr. Krantz: He was the group commander.

“To Sergeant Krantz for outstanding work, devotion to duty, and we are damned glad to have you with us.”

Mrs. Krantz: He wasn't careful with his words, he just said them.

Good Lord. That is absolutely amazing.

Mr. Krantz: The maid did come back to the states too. The crew was shot down but in a different plane. The day that they went down, the “American Maid” was on the ground for service. The crew was shot down but the “American Maid” came back to the states and wound up in a salvage yard in the Nevada Desert I believe it was. I've got the history of it.

Let me pause myself just for a moment and collect myself for the next set of questions here....Mr. Krantz you just got done telling me a very disturbing story.

Mr. Krantz: Let me start off. After I got back to Saipan I believe you got the rest of that. I stayed in the hospital at Saipan for a week and then they sent me to North Sector General in the Hawaiian Islands. I was the only frostbite case in the South Pacific. That made interest to most people that was involved with the medical and what have you because they didn't know what frostbite was. I had severe frostbite on both hands and arms and didn't have any circulation at all. This particular day of which was probably around the 15th or 18th of January, the doctor came in that morning and a nurse unwrapped my hand and found that the tip of my ring finger came off with the wrapping; gangrene had set in. He studied it and he told me that if he couldn't get circulation started that he was going to have to amputate because gangrene had already set in. They scheduled amputation for the next day on both hands. They left and an hour or so later they came back in and they had a young Lieutenant with him who was a personal friend of his from Boston. He had just finished medical school for the Army and was on his way to the Philippines. He stopped by to see his friend and he found out about the frostbite and he wanted to see what frostbite looked like. So the doctor and this young Lieutenant came back to the ward and he unwrapped my hand again and he seen it and he said, "I never seen a case of frostbite before." He said that it looked just like burns. He said, "I just got done studying a new procedure that the Army has got for burns. If it is alright it want make any difference and if it don't work it want matter. But I would like to try it." The Captain of the ward doctor said that we could. He asked him if we had a library to where he could get the procedure. So they went to the library and a couple of hours later they came down and rolled me into the operating room. This young Lieutenant had dressed out and he had three or four nurses and one of them was dressed out and had this book from the library and was reading this procedure. He told me that he would need my help if he did this procedure because I was going to have to tell him when he found what he was hunting for. He said, "When I find what I am hunting for it will be just like you hit your funny bone when you was a kid. If I find what I'm hunting for and you feel it, that is what I want you to tell me." He came out with a needle about six inches long. She started reading out of the medical book and said, "Go through the shoulder at a certain point and you go to where the nerve crosses the first rib." That is what he did with that needle. He went in up here and he came to the first rib. He found the first rib and he said, "Now I have got to find that nerve." He kept gouging and moving until he found that nerve and when he did I felt it from the end of my fingers. He put 21 cc's of fluid of some kind in that nerve. He pulled that needle out and went in to the other shoulder and done the same thing. Within inside of three hours my hands done started warming up and they cleared up to what you see right now.

This had occurred on January 3rd.

Mr. Krantz: Yes this was the latter part of January.

Okay. Now we are at the 18th of January or somewhere there about at this point; so that is fifteen days later. You spent nine days on sight there before they even got you out of

there. What was that nine days like, I have to ask you? While you were still sitting in that hospital you had no feeling and nothing was coming back.

Mr. Krantz: I didn't have any feeling at all.

Were you conscious during this time?

Mr. Krantz: Yes, I was conscious; in and out. The first night in the hospital in Saipan, my shoulder gave me more problems. I had more pain in my shoulder where I hit the gun site. I suffered more in my shoulders over the years than any other part up until the last few years. The government never recognized it as even being a disability. I left the hospital January 9th to Saipan and I had been in and out of consciousness and I hadn't eaten any solid food or anything for that period of time. The first thing I ate when I got to Hawaii which was about 8 o'clock at night in the hospital and this orderly came in and said he would see if he could find me something to eat. I had been on IV's. He went and found an egg and boiled it in an electric cup that they used in the pharmacy there. I had a boiled egg on the ninth day. It was the first solid food.

When you were coming out of that state of unconsciousness what were the kind of thoughts that were running through your head through this kind of time.

Mr. Krantz: I don't know.

Did you believe that somehow it was going to be alright?

Mr. Krantz: Well I always did believe that. I never had a doubt in my mind that I wouldn't come back home. I always felt like that I would get hurt; there was always a good chance of getting hurt. I was always cautious of everything I did. I was raised that way. My dad was a very safety minded person. He just didn't take chances. Even when the doctor told me that they were going to amputate the next day I didn't believe him. The nurse came back in after they left and made their rounds, the nurse came back in and she was crying. She said, "Don't get too upset, things can happen." So it never registered to me that I would lose both hands at that point.

It was just a chance meeting with this one young Lieutenant that happened to be there en route to somewhere else.

Mr. Krantz: I never got his name. He was on the route to the Philippines.

Mrs. Krantz: We have searched for him; there is no way we could ever find him.

Because of something he read about, he looked at your hands and said that it looked almost the same as burns. Then he tried this procedure and he hit the second shoulder and the second arm started to warm up too.

Mr. Krantz: Yeah, both of them did. But as quick as he found this one (left shoulder) he went in (right shoulder) and found that nerve just like that. He knew exactly where it was at.

What about the legs, how about your legs and feet, were those?

Mr. Krantz: Well they were numb for some time. I had bruised spots over me. I had raw spots from beating up against the side of the plane. It felt like a rag doll, floating in the air and flopping against the plane at 250 miles an hour. You can imagine what some of the...

Propeller wash and the rest of that just beating you up against there. I look at that picture and I find it incredible that I am sitting here talking to you or that you are here talking to me.

Mr. Krantz: Well it's incredible that the doctor would be there to take the picture. If he had not of made the report it would not have been a story because a person just doesn't live that long. If you are not magnated ___ that it would be an authentic story the timing wouldn't have been right because a person is not supposed to live that long. But by him being a medical man and making the report, he made the entire report, that is the only thing that made it a story. The only question that everybody came in was, "How did you do it?" I said, "I didn't do it." This one major came in and he was a medical man and he asked me a question or two. I said, "Doctor, that isn't my problem, that's yours!" There isn't but one answer to it. It's a miracle that God....

Do you have any memory at all at being on the outside of that thing? Did you maintain consciousness through that time?

Mr. Krantz: I knew that I went out but because of lack of oxygen I blacked out. But I was already on the outside. The last thing that I remember thinking about was the railroad yards in D___; I thought how far it looked from there to the railroad yards. It was a long way down to the railroad yards. That is the last thing that I really seen that I recorded in my mind. The next thing I recorded I was back inside and they were trying to hold me down and I was coming out of it and they were putting the oxygen mask on me. That is something that always happened. If you blacked out from lack of oxygen, when you come to you will be doing the same thing you were doing as when you went out. That is what they always taught us. If you bail out at high altitude, you free fall and then you freeze to death from lack of oxygen and everything else. You black out and so you free fall. This guy here he bailed out at 32,000 feet and he fell to 3,000 before he ever opened the rip cord. That was the way they taught us. They said if you got your hand on the rip cord when you go out, when you come to you will pull your rip cord.

We are going to have to pause here just for a moment.

Mildred you were saying that there were a couple of things left out in the story of his narrow escape.

Mrs. Krantz: One was when he got home out of the hospital and of course in the hospital too I'm sure of it. He had to wear gloves like in winter and summer because every time the wind would hit his hands they would turn black. It did that for two or three years before he could go without gloves in the summertime.

Mr. Krantz: I still have a problem with the quick change in the weather whether it's summer or winter. If it's 70 degrees and it dropped down to 50, it would be within three or four hours that my hands would be black on the account of circulation. No matter what the temperature is, if there is a drastic change it still does that to me.

Mrs. Krantz: The other thing that he left out was while he was in Clovis, New Mexico, I think; our first child was born on July 2, 1943.

Mr. Krantz: I was in Amarillo, Texas.

Mrs. Krantz: Ok. Where were you when Linda Gayle was born?

Mr. Krantz: I was in Herrington, Kansas. We were fixing to go overseas.

Mrs. Krantz: But you got to come home to see her. We had Carolyn out there with us.

Mr. Krantz: That was in Pratt, Kansas.

Mrs. Krantz: Our second daughter was born August 31st, 1944. There was fourteen months between them.

Mr. Krantz: I got a seven day pass and came from Herrington, Kansas in to see her. We finished our training and went to Herrington, Kansas, and ready to go to Saipan and we were there about 3 ½ weeks before they got runway enough for us to land on to Saipan. We had a chance to get a three day pass and stuff like that during those three weeks; during that period of time I came home. I got to see my #2 daughter.

Mrs. Krantz: The pilot on his plane took all those young guys, because they were young, he was 31 years old at that time. He just put his arms around all of them guys and adopted them for his sons. That is the way he treated them. When he found out that he had a new child, he made sure he got to come home to see her himself before they went overseas. You were asking me how I learned about it. I was at my mom and dad's house and the two babies and this young man was there. Of course he is the age of our oldest daughter. A man down the road a little ways, they had a radio, and he came up there and asked my dad, "Isn't one of your daughters married to James Krantz?" Of course I was sitting there and this young man was sitting there too. He loved my mom's cooking and he was up there a lot. He came in and he asked my dad that and he told us then what he had heard on that radio. A week after that, I got a notice from the government about it. I had known it a week and it had been happened two weeks before I ever heard it.

Now I imagine that was the end of your active service career.

Mr. Krantz: Yeah, I stayed in the hospital after the war was over. I was in the hospital at Camp Buckner, North Carolina.

Mrs. Krantz: Until August 24th.

It was about two weeks after. Now when you heard about Hiroshima what was your initial thought about that?

Mr. Krantz: Well I didn't know too much about it at that time what was going on. I knew that we had burnt out just about every big city. I found out later that we had paralyzed Japan. Japan was whipped before the atomic bomb was ever dropped. They were dropped to make the warlords come to the table to sign the treaty. We had one B-29 group on T_____ that was where the atomic bomb was flown from. We had a group there that mined the harbors; that dropped mines in the harbors. The fishing boats couldn't even go into the harbors to Japan. We stopped everything they had and on the day that the treaty was signed, we made the longest mission that was made in the war. We went all the way up to the north end of the island and blew up the last oil storage that Japan had. The crews were on the way back when they got the news that...

....the Japanese had surrendered.

Mr. Krantz: They could have saved that much if they would have come to the table. We never let up after we started going. After the first fire raid, Curtis Lemay had planes to drop leaflets over five cities and told the people that we wasn't mad at the Japanese people, we weren't at war with the people, we were at war with the warlords and we were going to burn one of those cities to the ground within the next five days or something like that. We asked that the civilians leave the cities. They started doing that. But we would hit one of those cities and burn it down and then we would fly and drop the leaflets over more cities. We did that until the war was over. We done burnt out everything they had. There war effort was made during small in-home contracts. Everybody did a little bit to help the war effort.

What happened to the crew of the "American Maid" after the time that you left in January?

Mr. Krantz: They made 26 missions. They were on their 26th mission when they went down. This is one of the guys that bailed out here. They were on fire from the report that we got at that time. They were on fire and went down over the ocean. But later in the last few years I found out through historians that they flew into the side of a mountain and four of them bailed out and was captured on the ground. Two of them were shot that day or the next day and one of them was shot two weeks later and the last one was shot on the day that the treaty was signed.

The day the treaty was signed, they shot the last POW from that plane?

Mr. Krantz: Yeah, from my crew. We found out through historians that different sections of Japan treated prisoners-of-war different. The section of Japan where my crew went down was some of the roughest ones over there. They didn't save any of them.

So there is nobody left from your crew other than you?

Mr. Krantz: I'm the only one left in my crew and the guy that took my place and flew with my crew for about twelve missions is still living. He finished his tour of duty. He

did 36 missions. He lives in California. His name is George Beck. George is still living. I saw him and his wife down in Memphis at the reunion this April.

Mrs. Krantz: He's been out here to see us a couple of times.

Mr. Krantz: Whenever they go to a reunion that is on the east coast, they come by and spend some time with us.

At your last reunion in Memphis, which was just a few months ago, how many left from the... was it a group reunion?

Mr. Krantz: It was the 73rd Bravo Wing. Out of the wing we had 213 registered and attended. Some of them were children of the veterans and some of them were spouses of the veterans that had already passed on.

Mrs. Krantz: There is not very many of the fliers of the crews left. The biggest amount of one crew that was there was four. The rest of them were like three and two and one; and then you got the one that was him. There is just a few of them left.

So you received the Purple Heart because it was combat related what happened to you?

Mr. Krantz: I also got an Air Medal with smoke leaf clusters, and some more medals I don't know what they are. I never received them. My son-in-law applied for them but I never have gotten them. My outfit got some other medals that I don't imagine I will be in. However, if it was a group medal or something like that I would be included in it.

When you came back home, I guess you had to make a life for yourself again. You didn't have time to think about a whole lot of that. How long was it before you were able to talk about any of that?

Mr. Krantz: Well I never did talk about it a whole lot. It more or less depended on the company I had and who I was talking to. I still have things that I haven't told her. Once in awhile I come out with something she doesn't know about.

Mrs. Krantz: You better be telling me.

Did you ever speak about this in front of your church?

Mr. Krantz: I have talked to three different schools; three different 5th grade classes in the last few years. The 5th graders came up and they had to write an essay on World War II. So it started out I went to Clarksville Academy. We baby sat a couple of twins, a boy and a girl, that go to school over there. Their mother is the Assistant Director there and when it came out on the agenda that they had to have an essay on World War II, they informed their mother that they wanted somebody over there to tell them what World War II was all about. We started out like that. We have a period of three or four different classes. The last one was the year before last or was it last year?

Mrs. Krantz: It was the year before.

Mr. Krantz: Up at Sango; the 5th graders; they had two 5th grade classes and brought them all together. It was 30 or 40 something of them. I had some literature that I came up with. I talked to them for a few minutes. I had an appointment with them right after

lunch. They brought both classes together. They told me I had all the time I wanted or needed. I told the teacher what I was going to do, I was going to talk to them and then I was going to give them some literature and then I would take questions. Well I talked to them and I gave them the literature and they started questioning. The teachers had to stop them because when the school bus came they were still asking questions.

Mrs. Krantz: Can you imagine a 5th grade class of kids; and it was three classes not two. But can you imagine kids that age being quiet, really quiet, for that long?

Mr. Krantz: I had to sign most of the stuff I gave them. I signed it for each student that came up wanting me to sign before they left. It was very interesting.

Did you and Leroy ever talk about or compare notes between your different experiences?

Mr. Krantz: Yeah we talked about it every once in awhile but we don't go into detail. Leroy never really went into detail and I never would either. Of course you can get all of the details you want on the history channel.

Just as a cross reference, Leroy Davis was a veteran of the Battle of the Bulge. I interviewed him just a few days ago. That is Mr. Krantz's brother-in-law. He kind of explained to me and I had it explained to me before that it was just so many people had taken part in this and that that whole generation almost figured that, "Well everybody did it. I didn't do anything any different than anybody else did." It's kind of an amazing thing you know that you have that many people together in this country.

Mr. Krantz: You know I don't have a brother but these ten people right here are the only brothers that I ever really had. We were together for a little over a year. We trained together, we ate together, we slept together in the same building, and we flew together.

Do you want to list their names for us so you will have it on a permanent record?

Mr. Krantz: Yeah I got it somewhere but I can tell you who they are. From left to right on the back row: Lieutenant John D. Bartley, pilot from Bozeman, Montana; Lieutenant Crow, co-pilot from Baltimore, MD; Lieutenant Whittie, Bombardier from Illinois; Lieutenant Manning, navigator from New Orleans; Oswald Joystadt, engineer from North Dakota; myself on the left on the bottom row. Russell Strong, radar operator; we were the first plane with radar. Al Hart, Central Fire Control man from California; Donald Wilson, tail gunner from Indiana; and Robert Angle from East Dubuque, Illinois; and on the far right bottom row was the ground crew chief which didn't go overseas with us.

To what do you attribute the fact that you are still here with us?

Mr. Krantz: The Lord's will; God's will.

Mildred how do you fill about it?

Mrs. Krantz: I know it. I know it is; it can't be anything. He had to bring him home because he still had three other children to produce. Since then after he got up in years a little ways, in 1988 he had five heart by-passes; in 1998 he had four more by-passes.

Mr. Krantz: Three of them were three of the original five. In 1998 I had my right knee replaced and in 2002 I had my left knee replaced.

Mr. Krantz: Between the heart by-passes and his knees he had a stroke.

Mr. Krantz: I had a stroke in 2000 and it affected my speech and my swallowing.

Not that I could tell.

Mr. Krantz: In 1997 I had a hiatal hernia in my esophagus and they rebuilt my esophagus and I can eat anything that anybody else can. I don't have any acid reflux.

Mrs. Krantz: In 2003 he had a blocked artery between his hip and his knee. He couldn't walk from here to the mailbox without stopping to rest. They took that out and redid it.

Mr. Krantz: No they put a stint in it.

You seem to be very, very happy. You both just seem like a wonderfully happy couple and I'm so happy for both of you. Just on my behalf and I know the nation for the most part feels the same way. Those who remember for my part I just want to thank you for your service to our country. I mean from the bottom of my heart I really want to thank you.

Mrs. Krantz: We want to thank you too Pat. You have been there too and we appreciate it.

Mr. Krantz: Well its attitude to which you know about it's a job to be done and you just do it. When World War II came about, when Japan bombed Pearly Harbor there wasn't but one solution. By the grace of God we were able to rebuild at the rate of speed we did and the reason why we were able to do that was because we were already geared up and we were furnishing war materials to England; Great Britain. When Pearl Harbor happened well we went right into full production and the people back here fell right in line. It wasn't only the GI's. The country as a whole fell right in line. It didn't make any difference what they had to do without. They did without. I found out along the way that the Army wasted more stuff than the; well a lot more stuff than the civilians had to do without here at home. It's amazing to me what the governments waste anyways. To me it is not black and white. If it goes in as a law or a ruling; it's black and white. I can remember one time I had a habit that if I didn't have anything else to do, I would volunteer for KP. It was a good way to keep busy and you always had plenty to eat and you had a lot of people to work with and talk to. I was waiting for a shipment when I was in Amarillo, Texas. I volunteered for KP on a Saturday and the menu called for pork chops, mashed potatoes, English peas and hot biscuits for Saturday lunch. A lot of people had gone on passes and what have you and we had a GI can full of left over pork chops. The menu called for cold cuts that night and they threw the GI can full of pork chops in the garbage and we ate cold cuts for supper that night. These kinds of things don't make sense to me as a country boy. You don't throw away that kind of stuff. And we still do it.

Is there anything that you would just like to add to the end of this here? Is there something you would like to say to whoever will be watching this?

Mr. Krantz: I think we have to put ourselves aside and do what has to be done. It's not done for me or my family. It's not what is good for us; it's what is good for the country we live in. If it isn't good for the country, it isn't good for me. I think that is the biggest problem we have with the country today. We got so many people in command that wants to make a name for their selves. They want it to be good for them. I'm not talking about just the military; I'm talking about in everyday walks of life. They want, "I want what I want!" If you are an elected official or if you are a manager or something or another, it isn't what you want. It's what is good for your company or your city or your county or your nation or what have you. If it's good for them it is always good for you. We can't seem to get that across to people. You see it every day; money is swindled. People are killed because somebody wants what they got and they don't want to work for it. It doesn't hurt anybody to work. It's one of the greatest privileges we ever had is to work. I graduated from the 8th grade; was as far as I went in school. Since then I have had 22 Tech schools that I have completed. I was an elected official in my local union as Secretary and Treasurer. One of the first things I did, I took a CPA course so I could take care of the job that I was elected to and I stayed in that job for twelve years. If you are going to do a job, qualify yourself for it. There's every kind of qualification out there if you just get out there and get it. A lot of people don't want to do that. They want what somebody else has got.

Well I'm grateful that there were a whole lot of people during the time this country was really hard put to it that saw the greater good of this country as their mission. Thank you and Mildred I thank you too because it's just as hard for those that stay at home in some ways.

Mrs. Krantz: It is in some ways. One thing, this country pulled together from 1941 to about 1955 or maybe 1960. Through the 40's and 50's pulled together like it has never pulled together Pat. I mean the guys that were overseas, the guys that were in the service were important. The women left and went to work; the guys went to war and the women went to work to make the war stuff. The ones that weren't working took care of the other kids. Everybody helped everybody else; there was not "It's got to be my way!" There was not any of that. Everybody worked in this country and pulled together like it has never done since. It was really neat and we all did without many things. You couldn't even get a piece of meat unless you raised it.

Folks thank you so much for your time, thank you!