



Chase Nielson

United States Army Air Corps

Lieutenant Colonel

Pacific Theater

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Rick Randle

THIS INTERVIEW IS NOT EDITED FOR CONTENT, LANGUAGE OR HISTORICAL ACCURACY

Rick: Well we're honored to be able to interview Chase Nielson today and Chase thanks for having us up in your home and we'd just like to ask you what your early life was like, where you were born and take us up briefly to maybe December 7th.

Chase: Well I was born and raised just 20 miles from here over the hill in Cache Valley a little town called Hyrum, and I say a little town, it was then and I know when I first got in the service they'd asked me where I came from I said "*oh it was a little town up in Hyrum it was so small they only had one village idiot*". But Hyrum has grown quite a bit since then and really I think it was a really good place to grow up. My dad had a farm, I worked hard, I think the first two things I learned were respect and responsibility and not only for myself but for my peers and my fellow men. I graduated from high school up there and then I entered college at Utah State, I studied Civil Engineering. I graduated from Utah State in 1939 with a degree in Civil Engineering. Prior to that I'd had a couple of rides in an Old Eagle rock that Doug Larsen owned out at the Logan Airport and Clark Barron here from Brigham used to come up in his little STN Ryan and buzz us and bug us to death and then Russell Mahn who was in the old Army Air Corp at Fort Douglas came up there with his old Jetty's and he'd bring several of them – eight or nine or ten in a formation and those always land on dad's farm because he had one skiff of ground about 300 feet wide that was about two blocks long and it didn't have any ditches in it so it was a good place to land in. And with all that I kind of got a whiff of exhaust I guess in my nostrils and I haven't gotten over it yet but after my senior year in college the Army Air Force medical team came around conducting physical exams. They said they were expanding the cadet flying program and if you could pass the physical part of it then they would leave you in college until you graduated before you got your call to go to pilot training. So my senior year, I don't remember what time of year it was but I took the exam anyway and I passed the flying exam and I felt pretty good about that, but I should have done after working for about 18 years on a farm I was in pretty good shape. I was really in better shape than I thought I was I guess. But anyway I graduated in May and then in August I got my call to go to pilot training and that was a great day. I hustled my little backside down to Hancock School of Aeronautics at Santa Maria California and the first thing I saw when I got out of the bus out at the airport was about 70 PP13's lined up in a row and I'm telling you they really looked like something. And I thought

well one of those was going to be mine so it really turned out to be and I had my instructor...I had good instructors, some of them were still Lieutenants in the service and some of them had been in and got their pilot training and their pilot rating and then they'd gotten out again. Two or three of them had been flying with...then starting commercial airlines. I think generally commercial airlines at that time that would fly over land was probably the old DC3 Douglas Aircraft two engine and the Boeing 243 or 247, it was a twin engine too and I thought '*well if I get through my pilot training then I can do my active duty time and go commercial*'. And it seemed to me to be a little more enticing than to walking out through the woods carrying a transister rod over your shoulder and being an engineer.

Rick: This was August of 1941 right?

Chase: '39.

Rick: And were there any...did you even realize that Japan was a potential enemy or that Germany could have been a potential enemy at that time?

Chase: No and really at that age you didn't read the newspaper, you were looking for girls. That was more of an interest – your schooling and the girls, girlfriends. No, we hadn't even thought about it but I finished pilot training at Santa Maria then I went to advance or basic training at Randolph at San Antone. Then I finished basic training at Randolph then we had advanced flight training at Kelly that concerned some instrument training, flight training, night flying and one thing and another and of course we used to have guys get lost once in a while and they'd land in somebody's cotton field and then we'd have to haul gas out to them because they'd fly until they didn't have anymore fuel, they didn't know where they were but they could still find a place big enough to sit down in. They did use some of their intelligence. Well I got lost a couple of times I'd try to find a city that had a water tower because if you flew around it it always had the name of the city on it, then you could look at your map and find out where you were then you could figure out how to get home. But I didn't have any trouble through the training, when I finished basic or advanced at Kelly they sent half, about half my class over to Barksdale in Shreveport Louisiana to get some twin engine time. They had some old Martin B10's and 12's and the

Douglas B18 and we...about three months flying the combination of those airplanes to get checked out in twin engine time. The B10...the B12's quite a bit different than the B18 because in the B18 the pilots sit side by side but in the Martin B10 and 12 the main pilot sat up over the wing and then back over the bomb bay on the top of the fuselage was another canopy where the co-pilot sat and his chair was on a swivel; it just swung out from the fuselage and he put his feet on two bolted rollers that were bolted on to the rudder cables and that's what they had for the rudders – quite a contraption.

Rick: In those days there were no radar, no air traffic controllers or anything like that I guess.

Chase: Oh yeah, hardly any radio. You could get 40 miles from home and call the tower and you couldn't talk to anyone.

Rick: Well that's interesting. Well then what happened?

Chase: Well when I finished twin engine school they were just setting up the first aerial navigation school. Now this had gone into 1940 – the time it takes about three months for each of these schoolings, there was three to six but anyway one of the pilots, well two of the pilots were aerial navigators. One had been on the Southern Cross when it flew down I think to South America somewhere or down in southern regions, they hadn't been doing much extensive navigation because there really wasn't that kind of navigation really it wasn't...no one had any knowledge about it. But at any rate they set up the navigation school so several of us decided well if we're going to make a career flying even commercial maybe we ought to know a little bit about navigation rather than just flying down the road looking for road signs to see where you're at. There was no restriction at what altitude you flew at other than while we were in pilot training – after you got out flying you just flew from here to there wherever you wanted to go. I know when later on when we got up to McCord Air Force Base and we wanted to go to a football game down in California or like the Rose Bowl or that you just get a bunch of guys together and file a flight plan for LA or somewhere and away you went. It was a great life.

Rick: So you could attend all the interesting sporting events around the country like that.

Chase: Yeah, but at any rate we finished the navigation school then we were assigned to our first combat bombing unit which was the 17th Bomb Wing at McCord Air Force Base up at Tacoma Washington. So when we got up there they had B18's and several B23's – I think there were only about 39 B23's built. They were built by Douglas but I think they were the tail end of the DC3 contract. Anyway they were a neat airplane, they had pretty high powered engines although they were a little bit faster than anything else we had flown at least you could fly about 180 miles an hour instead of 120. So we were pretty happy, we settled down and learned to be bomber pilots and then in June or July of '41 the new airplane came out called the B25 and the first ones that came out had the wing that was on a dihedral from the fuselage all the way out on an upwards slope and they were sloppy in the air. If you put it into the high speed turn like a 60 degree bank there wouldn't be any wing to hold you up and you'd fall right out from under it. So after flying awhile, I think they only built about 20 of them but we kept conferring with North American and finally they took the wing and they dropped the wing from the outside edge of the engine about 7 degrees and then they put a concave shaping underneath it they called a '*Davis Air well*'. That really cleaned the airplane up then and the power settings that were recommended by North American, you can cruise at 220, and at high speed it was redlined at 300 and I have seen them out fly the best fighters we had in the Air Force at the time. It was a honey of an airplane after they cleaned the wing up. So we practiced with those for a while and got a few crews checked out, then we had some maneuvers down in South Car...North and South Carolina and Georgia – they called it the '*Red and White Army*' and we went down there, I don't even remember which army I was fighting for but we'd go out once in awhile and dump a ten pound sack of flour out the window or have the bombadeer throw it out the back door out the bomb bay and that was our bombing, then we'd look to see where it hit and yeah it was pretty close. Of course we weren't doing any work where we were hurting any population or anything, we were out in the back woods. We finished our training so we decided...then our wing had moved to McCord Field down to Pendleton Oregon while we were down south on maneuvers and we had reached the Kelly Field in San Antone on our way coming back around to go up to Oregon on the 7th of December and on the morning of the 7th of December it happened to be on a Sunday, there were several of us that wanted to go into town and we had a buddy down there that had a convertible so we all piled in his convertible and we were going in to San Antone I guess

to get something to eat and look around on a Sunday and before we got to town we heard on the radio that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. Well we had never given the Japanese a second thought. We hadn't really been keen enough to know that they had occupied Manchuria and Korea and Northern China and half the South Pacific and they were going down through the Pacific on a stream roller effect. But I'll tell you it was a very sobering radio broadcast and we knew better than to go on in to town, we just turned around and went back and put on our flying gear, loaded up our airplanes and headed for Pendleton Oregon.

Rick: So on December 7th you flew from Texas back to Pendleton Oregon, not knowing what the future was going to bring to you?

Chase: Not an idea. When we got to Pendleton we'd had enough staff left there and I assume they knew a little more about what was going on in the Pacific than we did because we didn't much more than land on the ground until we had re-fueled, got some more clothing, got all our flying gear, loaded back up in our airplane with a load of bombs also in the bomb bay and flew down to Portland with orders to be on Sub Patrol the next morning at daylight.

Rick: Well that's interesting. So they didn't know or half way expected Japanese submarines to be off the Pacific coast.

Chase: Well they knew pretty much about a convoy that was out there about 800 miles and they assumed that it was the nucleus of the unit that bombed Pearl Harbor and if they had, thorough our intelligence, we can figure that they had five large submarines that we considered to be 85-men subs and then they had about 21 or 22 of the small two-man subs and a lot of those two-man subs were already harassing the coast. They had seen them surface right off the coast and some of them were working through Puget Sound and coming down or through the strait up there and coming down through Puget Sound and surfacing and making observations of the Bremerton Navy yard in Seattle at night. Well, after about three nights of that the Coast Guard got smart so they got over on the Olympic Peninsula and then when they'd surface at night they'd see them sitting there against the lights of Seattle and just level off and blow them out of the water. But we flew a lot of sub patrol out of Portland and we flew...we'd go back up to the Canadian border

and then we'd fly our patterns down to an extended line from the top of California then the unit...down I guess at March Air Force Base or down at Sacramento or down in that area was flying sub patrol down further in the Pacific. But one morning it was cloudy and we usually flew at about 1500 – 2000 feet, it's a pretty dangerous altitude to be dropping 500 pounders from and one morning the ceiling was patchy, there were little storm clouds hanging down lower than that and one of the guys came up through one of the clouds in a Japanese big jet and he saw Bramon sitting right in front of him.

Rick: How far off the coast?

Chase: About 50 miles. We saw about 4 or 500 pounders on him and about three days later there were four bodies washed in on the shoreline so he got a Silver Star for sinking a Japanese submarine.

Rick: Well that's interesting. You know they didn't ever mention anything like that to the main population of the United States.

Chase: Well there were a lot of those little two-men submarines that'd get in the mouth of the Columbia river and I guess they were trying to get up as far as Portland into the dock area to see what the shipping was and every once in a while they'd catch one going up the river and they'd just blow him out on the bank. But we flew sub patrol...oh I don't know for three or four weeks I guess and then we rotated back to base and they decided that we've got to move the bomb wing down to Columbia South Carolina and we thought *'well we'd get down there we'd be on (purposely I guess) to be on sub patrol in the Atlantic for German submarines and in the Gulf'*. The German submarines were harassing a lot of shipping in the gulf. And we got down there, I never even flew a mission, I'd only been there about two days and word got out that a guy by the name of Jimmy Doolittle was coming in on a certain day and there was going to be a Wing Commander's Call in the base theater – everyone would be there, there was no...wouldn't even be anyone flying out on sub patrol. And of course most of us knew who Doolittle was, we knew about Doolittle and Lindbergh and everybody else that had ever flew an airplane including Rickenbacker and whatnot...

Rick: This was in January of '42?

Chase: This was...well it was about the first week in February because we were flying sub patrol in December and January out in Portland but in the theater like I said we all knew that Jimmy was an acrobat, that he was a stunt pilot, that he knew more about flying than anyone else. We also knew that he had a doctorate degree in Aeronautical Engineering that he'd got from MIT and he used to kid us about that. He got hit in 27 and he said *"you guys should have got your doctorate degree in engineering when I did – we only had two airplanes, it was easy"*. But anyway, Jimmy came in and he started to cross the stage and I thought *'is that really Jimmy Doolittle'*? He didn't look big enough to have a name like that you know and the record he had you'd look for some big guy. He walked up to the pulpit and he says *"I'm Jimmy Doolittle"*, he said *"I've been assigned a mission, its very dangerous, it will take us out of the states for probably 30 to 60 days and then we'll be back, we'll go temporary duty. It could mean you life, it's that dangerous. That's all I can tell you about it except I need volunteers. Who'll volunteer?"* Well that isn't a whole lot to volunteer on, we all looked at each other *'what's going on'*? The guy sitting next to me...of course going through Nav. School I was a navigator and a pilot, I was dual qualified so I nudged the pilot that was sitting next to me who turned out to be the one I flew with on the mission. I said *"what do you think about it?"* and he said *"well if we're ever gonna get trained I guess we gotta start sometime"*. So...

Rick: How many volunteers?

Chase: Well the whole wing volunteered. Yeah the guys that went raid all have a different story why they did. The one said he was so little he didn't think they'd even take him but he volunteered because everybody else did. The whole wing volunteered.

Well then it started and we got to wondering *'well what are all these airplanes while they're coming down from Pendleton to Columbia South Carolina – why are they always going through Michigan or Minneapolis and getting spare gas tanks put on them?'* We knew that the B25 would only hold about 340 gallons in the wing it was good for about oh maybe 1500 miles or probably 8 hours and they were putting all of these extra fuel tanks on. Then when Doolittle

decided he wanted volunteers the next day we had another Commander's Call and somebody read a list of names and my name was on it. They said *"you get you a crew, meet at the hangar at 8 o'clock in the morning, you'll get your final briefing and then you're going to Florida to practice"*. And I thought *'well we're going to go to Florida to practice for what?'* So we complied with orders and when we got down to Egglund...and they went out to Auxiliary Three, it was clear out in the tules and I thought *'well what the hell are we doing out here? This is rugged terrain, nobody can see what we're doing and the only way you can get out here is to fly in or fly out'*. So then Doolittle came out and the word was we were going to start doing practicing short field take offs and we'd get the airplane all settled you know and then we'd pour the throttle to it and try and get the fire wall before you would take on the runway. And oh we were taking 2 or 3,000 feet to get off and then the next morning we noticed the navy guy over there in uniform and he walked out and was pacing down the runway and he walked out 500 steps and drew a line and the guys put some big markers across it so you could see it and they made...come back where the back end of the runway was where you run up to take off and made another painted spot and he says, *"you're gonna start from there and you're gonna be airborne when you get from there and I'm from the Navy and I'm over here to teach you short field take offs"* and I thought *'why do we need short field take offs?'*, then the speculation started – oh well they're going to take us...load us on a carrier and take us somewhere and dump us off to do sub patrol, maybe they'll take us over to Europe somewhere in North Africa or maybe even Hawaii and dump us off for sub patrol because we can't fly that far. So there wasn't a whole lot more said about it for a while and we got to where we were getting pretty proficient so we pulled up to the sand spot, lock the brakes, fire all the throttles until the airplane would about shake you right out of the seat then release the brakes and it'd about throw you back out of the seat. Start down the runway, pull the yoke all the way back into your lap and hope when it stalled off that it didn't go back down. One of them did and it doubled up the shoe slods and we had another one slide in sideways but most of them were running a little over 500 feet but eventually we got down to where we were getting off in less than 500. When we flew a lot of missions on cruise control we'd change the power settings on the carburetors and we'd fly with less RPM, less manifold pressure where we'd been (I don't know what the original settings were now because I've flown so many...much other stuff since) but at any rate the cruising speed was about 220 the way we were flying before but by cutting it back (I think we were running about 2100 RPM) but cutting

it back to about 1800 or 1850 and then dropping the manifold pressure we were cruising at about 185 but we were saving a lot of fuel. And this is what they wanted too, then we found out the tanks that went in...there was one on top of the crawl way in the airplane the bomb bay sits in between the cockpit for the pilot and that and the radio operator and the gunner and then the bombadeer is down in the nose then you go through the bomb bay but you have to crawl over it into the back end and that's where your tail gunner and waste gunner's are. Well on top of that crawl way we put a flexible tank that held about 180 gallons and then in the top of the bomb bay we hung one in there that held another 180 and that kept the bomb hold short by two bombs or we could've carried two more 500 pound bombs instead of four. And the Bendix turrets we had, they were electric and they didn't work worth a hoot so they took the one out the lower aft turret and put a flex tank in there – put 60 gallons of gas in it and then we had 10 five gallon cans in the back end. So we had where the wing tanks held 640 we now had 1100 and some gallons of fuel on. But we had run a lot of practice missions so we knew what our best settings were, we had also done a lot of bombing and the Norton bombsite is a class A-1 instrument if you're bombing from altitude but at 1500 feet and 220 miles an hour the telescope won't track fast enough to follow the bomb or follow the target. So we rigged up an aluminum plate with a slide on it like an old gun sight and we'd sit in on the target way out there and then we knew that when we got about to here that's where you had to drop the bomb for the actual time of fall so it'd get on the target. We called it the Mark Twain – 25 cent bombsight, the one we'd been using was about 6,000 dollars but it was classified as heavy and we were glad to get rid of it. But after, when we got our targets all signed over in Japan and read our targets – my target was about 600 long and 300 feet wide and at 2,000 feet you can't miss it. You don't even need a bombsight.

Rick: But while you were going through this you still had no idea where your mission was going or?

Chase: No, you still didn't have any idea and when the boss would hear anybody speculating he'd say *"I don't want you guys to even talk about this, this is highly classified and if word every leaks out on this you'll never get out of Sing Sing – just don't talk about it among yourselves"* and hardly any of us had our wives down there so.

Rick: And how many men were involved?

Chase: Well it was...when it wound up we had more crews than we actually needed they figured that they could take maybe 20 aircraft off the carrier but then when they got to looking at the carrier and the stacking of the airplanes we couldn't put anything down in the hangar deck, we had to put it all up on the flight deck. The hangar doors weren't big enough to put – the wing was too wide. So we all started up by the superstructure which stuck out – I think the beam on the carrier at the widest point by the superstructure was about 75 feet and the length from wingtip to wingtip on the 25 if I remember right is about 67 ½ so we all had to start from up in the same area and the ocean was so rough there was water all over the deck it was slicker than glass and they put sand patches down so we all ran from there and we figured well if one can get off in less than 500 feet you all can.

Rick: So how many men? You had 20 aircraft on...

Chase: Well we had 16 aircraft and 5 men to the aircraft – we had 80 men. But then we had 5 full crews on board that could take any of our places. Five full crews and the crews were...well some crews run the bombadeer, the navigator ran as the bombadeer and some crews the engineer ran as the bombadeer and in one case our medic had to be checked out as a gunner in order to get to go. So we were all...there was enough cross training in all of us you could work on any part of the aircraft.

Tape Interrupt

Rick: Tell that story that was incorrect about the movie “*30 Seconds Over Tokyo*” that you just mentioned.

Chase: Well in the movie “*30 Seconds Over Tokyo*” the night we left England or the night before we were supposed to leave they had a big party in the Officers Club and everybody was dancing with their wives and girlfriends – the mission was so classified that when we left...normally moving from Pendleton to Columbia South Carolina the wives hadn't quite

caught up with them and when they moved from Egglund (from Columbian down to Egglund) there was only about three wives that went down there so we couldn't have been dancing with our wives and girlfriends and anyway we left there at midnight and we had been told we were going to go to McClelland Air Force Base in California, get our props cleaned up and some extra work we had to do on the airplanes and then we would go from there to Alameda and we would load on the Aircraft Carrier USS Hornet and this was the first indication we ever had that we were going to go on an Aircraft Carrier. But when the boss said "*we're going to McClelland and then to the Navy base and land on the Hornet*" we had all thought possibly that we would be transferred up to the North Sea or to England somewhere where we could run sub patrol and the reason we had practiced short-field takeoffs so we could get off the carrier if we had to so it could get it's airplanes out of the hanger deck. Well then when he said we were going to wind up in California we knew we were going west and we said '*well everything now we've surmised about the east is out the window, now where are we going*'? Well after we got to Alameda they loaded on the carrier, they pulled the carrier...soon as they got the last airplane on board they pulled the carrier out of the base stream, leave it out there so...

Rick: They loaded those B25's by crane?

Chase: By crane right on the flight deck and just had them all down a level on the flight deck. Then they said, "*Well now you land lovers can have shore leave tonight cause we're not going to leave till 8 o'clock in the morning*". But Captain Mitcher on the carrier said the reason he had pulled it out in the base stream is so he didn't have to do any maneuvering around with any traffic in the morning – he had a straight shot for the Golden Gate and the wide open ocean.

Rick: That was it. And what were your accommodations like on the carrier?

Chase: Oh, a canvas cot and 90 percent of us stayed in the Admirals quarters in his briefing room. Shorty Manch was the tallest guy on board he was about 6 foot 8 and when they told us where our quarters were and I got down to where mine were and they said "*this is the Admirals quarters*" and I thought well I'll walk in and take a look so a couple of us walked in and when we opened the door Shorty was in bed and about that much of his feet were sticking over the end

of the bed. He'd already taken over the Admirals quarters. But the navy treated us real good. They were better poker players than the Air Force but they treated us real good and we got smart pretty quick because when we'd go down to dine we knew that they had *'duty stations'* right after you'd get through the evening meal and we'd delay it a little bit so we'd get locked in the Admirals quarters and that way we could eat more cake and ice cream.

Rick: So when did you first hear about the real mission?

Chase: Well we loaded...the day they moved the carrier out we went out from under the Golden Gate Bridge and I can remember everybody standing there and giving a big old salute saying "*I hope we see you soon again*" and we got outside of land and the bullhorn came on and they said "*now hear this – this convoy is headed for Tokyo*".

Rick: Was there a big cheer?

Chase: Oh yes! Every navy guy that was onboard threw his hat in the air.

Rick: Even the navy guys didn't know where they were going until that point?

Chase: No they didn't know they didn't have any idea. So we started having briefings and went through a lot of target study and do our chute storage at night. It sure easy to navigate by celestial in the navy, you're not going too fast. You have all kinds of lines of positions. But we had a lot of intelligence, the Trout Submarine had been either in or had been in Tokyo Bay – they were over there on a classified mission and they had gotten under a cruiser and followed it through the mine field right into Tokyo Bay and they'd been in there for several days. They even have pictures sitting up on the beach eating sandwiches. They told us where all the barrage balloons were specifically what target was what and the reason we wanted to know about the barrage balloons, they all had cabling and chains hanging down underneath and at the altitude we went in if we'd hit any of those boy it'd been curtains. But I know that while...anyway we did all our target study and everything and come out with our target assignments I think it was six of

us bomb Tokyo and then somebody bomb Nagoya and Osaka and Kobe and I don't remember what they were just keep really wake the Japanese up which it did.

Rick: And you were given specific buildings or specific plants to bomb?

Chase: Oh yeah, yeah definitely. A steel mill smelter area – one aircraft had two aircraft carriers that were in for repair that was sitting right next to dry dock and another one had another ship that was...well big battleships I guess or something that was in the bay. Most of us had...it was all industrial targets and according to intelligence anything we bombed in Japan would have been an industrial target because even in the homes they were doing sewing or any piecemeal work they could do to put it all together. But then the day came or the night before we were to take off on the night of the 17th we were listening to JOAK Tokyo Broadcast and they were talking about how they were celebrating the cherry blossom festival and one guy on board his wife's name was Jurica, he was a navy...a Lieutenant Commander I guess but he had been in Japan at the Military Embassy under peaceful terms and he spoke Japanese real well too, I think he was really born and raised in the Philippines but he said they said they were celebrating the Cherry Blossom Festival in peaceful Japan, you'd never know they were at war and due to the celestial virtues – the Emperor, the island is impregnable and I don't know what all and he said *"you better believe I'm going to hear what they say tomorrow night"*.

Rick: Were they speaking in English on that radio station?

Chase: No they were speaking in Japanese and he was interpreting for us. I guess then the next morning we'd just had breakfast and got back and we decided well we better start getting our stuff all buttoned up and get them in our bags and get ready to go load the airplane because we're going to take off about dark and all at once *"KABOOM, KABOOM"* and I thought *'what the world's goin on out there'?* And it said over the speaker that we had contacted the Japanese and I thought *'oh boy, what have we done now run into a convoy'?* Well they were smart enough they'd put a picket line out there 800 miles out of Japan and they figured I guess we'd gone by some of them in the dark but this one in the daylight he was too close and they figured he'd radioed in and I found out later that he had but they were a little skeptical about what they had

heard on the...the Japanese were a little bit skeptical. According to...Glimes interviewed one of the guys that was on the Mini Marroo I guess but they sank it anyway and he said he went up on board and he said *"I saw this big convoy and I went back down and I woke up the Commander and I told him"* he said *"there's a big fleet out there and there's two of the most beautiful aircraft carriers you've ever seen"*. And he said, *"he went up and looked and he said 'but they're not ours'"* and he went back down in the cabin and shot himself.

Rick: Oh really – so did they radio in or is there any evidence that they radioed?

Chase: They radioed in but they had so much other stuff going on and they just happened to be pulling a practice air raid warning so they had everything all a-clutter, they had set some small fire they were trying to put out with a bucket brigade and I don't know what all and all at once the bombers go over.

Rick: And so that ship was shot out of the...I mean it sunk and then did you pick up some survivors?

Chase: Yeah they picked up four guys – four Japanese off from it and they brought them back to Hawaii and interned them till the end of the war.

Rick: And then you guys took off several hundred miles out...

Chase: Well yeah and then Halsey said, *"Man your bombers army"* so we said, *"well I guess this is it, we gotta go. I hope we can make it"* because we took off between 8 and 9 in the morning and that was a pretty good job getting 16 airplanes off the carrier in one hour – three minute intervals.

Rick: Right and did you realize at the time that you might be short of gas because you had to take off further out than what you thought?

Chase: Yeah I think back here somewhere in the back of our heads we all knew that we were going to have to scrimp and go like mad but first we had to get off the carrier – you think of that, then you’ve got to find Tokyo and you’ve got to bomb it without getting shot down then you’ve got to find China, then you’ve got to find the airbase you’re going into so you’ve got a lot of things to think of before you think about landing.

Rick: Let me ask you one question – were they’re any of the crews that opted not to go or did they...

Chase: Not a one.

Rick: Not one – they all stayed with it even though they realized the danger?

Chase: And I know one of the guys came down the deck with a whole fist full of green money that he’d won from the navy. The navy were good poker players but they weren’t that good – he had a whole fist full of green; he wanted to buy anybody’s seat. He didn’t care whether it was the tail gunner, the waste gunner, or who it was.

Rick: And he had no takers?

Chase: No takers.

Rick: Well that’s interesting, you know the courage of going, of young men probably in their early 20’s or younger going in harms way like that is amazing and so that’s interesting. Sorry to interrupt go ahead with...

Chase: I don’t think any of us actually realized how we could end up. And you know it could have been a lot worse than it was. I think we were pretty fortunate.

Rick: All right well lets go on with getting...taking off of the aircraft carrier.

Chase: But anyway we took off and when I climbed up to the airplane I looked at the airspeed meter and the airspeed needle was sitting on 50 and I thought '*oh boy we're already doing 50 and we're not even off the ground yet*'. We had calculated too down at Egglund we could get off the ground in less than 500 feet and we only had 8 knots of wind to fly into and we didn't have any Hornet under us doing any speed so when we left the Hornet we were actually 627 out of Tokyo instead of 300 but we had 12 knots of wind and they had the Hornet doing 37 so we had 49 knots of wind across the deck before we even started so we only had to roll that airplane about 30 miles an hour and then it was airborne but it was hanging right on those big engines and no one had any problem at all.

Rick: Well that's interesting. And no casualties taking off of any of the planes?

Chase: Yeah one navy guy. The last airplane happened to be the other crew that was captured but they were hanging with their tail right back over the back end of the carrier and when they got a hold of the ropes to pull it on up forward he slipped...one of the navy guys slipped or something and stuck his arm out to catch himself and the prop took it off just below the elbow however he lived and he's been to a couple of our reunions too.

Rick: Well that's interesting.

Chase: And then we were all on our own then. Just as you took off everyone...you takeoff and then circle and come back over the carrier because you wanted your coordinates of the area place you were leaving and when we got within about...oh we'd been airborne about 45 minutes I guess I tuned in to JOAK Station – in my work on my maps and stuff to navigate I had plotted every big city that I could plot on the China coast and all over up the coast of Japan and then I'd gone through two or three other books the navy had that listed these cities and the radio stations like JOAK was Tokyo radio station and what it's frequency was and that way I knew what all these frequencies were and I knew what city they came out of and it was a good thing I did because we couldn't...the way the weather was I couldn't shoot celestial and we weren't flying at night anyway and the sun wasn't out and the only thing I had to rely on is radio and I was shooting radio bearings. The last radio station I was listening to was Shanghai and they had a

British program on, the guy that was playing the music was Ted Steel and his ????. And when that bearing and this one crossed I knew I should be on the China coast. Well it kept getting closer and closer and of course before that to fly in Tokyo when I tuned into JOAK it kept getting stronger and stronger too and finally the needle on the radio compass centered and the pilot could see it and I said *“that’s what you’ve got to follow. Just keep that needle centered and you’ll split Tokyo right in the middle”*.

Rick: Well that’s interesting. Did you have any...every plane that you didn’t fly in formation – every plane had a separate mission and they were just on their own?

Chase: Yep.

Rick: Okay and then did you meet any...anything on the way any other Japanese aircraft?

Chase: I only saw one airplane over Tokyo – one of our B25’s over Tokyo and he was coming across this way and I was coming in this way and I saw 6 Jap fighters in the air but they were up so far that I don’t think they even saw us. We were so low we hedge hopped from the point of Inibuzaki where we first hit the island into Tokyo bay and you could see the farmers all down there in their rice patty’s and they’d take their hat off and wave it at you.

Rick: They didn’t realize you were American planes obviously.

Chase: Well we had that white star with the red center and we didn’t have the quadrangle around it and it looked just like their *‘meatball’*, they could’ve mistaken it. Well we were on our own and my pilot says *“well how much longer do we gotta go before we coast in”*? and I looked at my watch and I said *“we got about three minutes and we should be over the China coast”* and it was getting pretty dark and it was raining and the weather was stinking – you couldn’t see a thing and the bombadeer was still up in the nose and I said *“Meeter you better get back here in the well with me”* because we had decided that rather than climb and get in an adverse wind that we would fly until we ran out of fuel and ditch in the ocean so we were probably not more than 50 feet off the water all the way. I said *“you better get back here because if those engines quit*

we're going in in a hurry and I don't want you up in the nose or you're gonna get killed for sure" and he said "well I want to stay down here because I just saw a little island go by underneath and if it's one that's got trees on maybe I can yell quick enough so we can miss it".

Rick: And this is before you made the bombing run your talking about or after?

Chase: This is after.

Rick: Well lets go back to where you were flying into Tokyo and tell us about dropping the bombs and...

Chase: Oh, well I just followed the radio station in until we could visually pick up Tokyo and the bay area and then with the help from the bombadeer was getting down in the nose we both had a set of maps or what the target was and we were conferring on different things around the island and we both would acknowledge that's what it was so then he said – I think there's two...we had two targets we had were triangle shaped.

Rick: And how low's your elevation at that time?

Chase: 1500 feet.

Rick: 1500 feet after you crossed the ocean at 50 you went up to 1500.

Chase: Yep at 220 miles an hour. And he said "yeah" and I said "well that's it" and he said "well I got the one in the crosshairs right now and the other one is just beyond it" and he said "I've already figured if I drop two there and two there that'll do it" and I said "but you don't want to drop two – you've only got four bombs and you've got three He's and one of them is an incendiary cluster – what are you going to do with it"? And he said "I'll figure that out", but he said "if I drop two on that first big target and then I go one-two and drop the other one it's going to hit the other target right in the middle". I said "fine" and then Dean came in – the pilot and he said "I've already figured out what he's going to do with the incendiary – I'm going to circle

and come back and we're gonna go over the target area and spread it all over". And I kidded him I said "are you sure you're not going to circle and go over the Imperial Palace"? Because when the guys found out we were going to Tokyo they cut the cards to see who got the high card – who got to bomb the Imperial Palace and Doolittle about went off the roof! He said, "You can bomb anything but the palace". He said, "you bomb that and kill the Emperor and you'll have those people so mad and close together that we never will get the war over".

Rick: Well that's interesting – so that was off limits for sure.

Chase: So we dropped the two and circled and come in and dumped the incendiary. The incendiary was a 183 pound thermite bomb and at the speed and altitude we were at when that batch broke open it was supposed to wipe...cover an area 200 feet wide and 600 feet long with 180 bombs and three pounds of thermite will burn three to six inches of steel – you don't put it out. It has it's own oxidizer so I know we had some good fires going too.

Rick: And were there any shots from any anti-aircraft guns or anything like that?

Chase: Oh there was shots coming out...most of it was coming up from the ships that were anchored in the bay. I don't think they had much anti-aircraft or anything else home for home defense and that was part of the program too, we wanted to get them to bring some of that junk back home for home defense so to lighten up the war down in the islands.

Rick: Right. So after you circled and dropped the fire bombs on the target then...

Chase: Well we dropped back down to 50 feet and went right out the bay and after we'd cleared the bay by about 10 miles we just turned south/southwest and went on down the island.

Rick: Did you realize that you weren't going to have enough gas to land anywhere?

Chase: Well we started wondering about it then and we'd keep a pretty close tab on it and that's when Dean wanted to know how much time we got before we crossed the coast and I said *"three*

minutes” and about that time the left engine quit and the right engine went ‘*chunk, clunk*’ and it quit. We were out of fuel. But the reason he asked me was because the fuel warning light had come on that he was out of fuel and he’d turn the bulb out so it wouldn’t bother him.

Rick: And the plan was originally to land on a Chinese airfield somewhere.

Chase: Well they had...yeah the Chinese airfield wasn’t ten miles from where most of us went down. But the C47 that was coming out of China with the radio on for us to home in on had run into a mountain in the clouds and so we never got his to use and Doolittle had a homer on his and if he landed he was going to turn it on so he could home in on his and he bailed out. So here we are.

Rick: And had you taken off a couple of hundred miles closer to Japan you would have had enough fuel to make that airbase wouldn’t you?

Chase: Yeah, we would’ve made the airbase but I don’t know under...what the circumstances would have been. It would have been a lot better if we could have hit there in the morning at daylight when we could see something. Because I guess the Chinese...all the Chinese didn’t know we were coming either. The Chinese that needed to know knew. Well when we hit it tore the left wing off and split the fuselage open and threw the pilot and his chair right out through the windshield.

Rick: Okay well take us back to...you just realized both your engines were out and you were still over water or were you?

Chase: Still over water and just held it straight forward until it stopped. When it hit that running into water is just as hard as running into ground.

Rick: All right and so what happened after that?

Chase: Well like I said it tore the airplane up. It tore the left wing off and split the fuselage open and I hit my head on something. I don't think I even got belted down so I wacked my head pretty good it was bleeding on my ear and it was bleeding on this side but when I come to enough to know where I was I was in water right up to here and I was standing right in the navigator well and I grabbed the 'crash act' which was hanging up here and knocked the top window out and then I went out the top window and that's when I found out the other guys were already out there.

Rick: How far off of the coast were you?

Chase: I haven't any idea, it was dark.

Rick: It was dark and so you were out in the water.

Chase: It was dark – they don't have a big highway up and down the coast, they don't have any lights – nothing and probably if they had of had when they heard the airplane they'd have probably blacked out and thought it was Japanese aircraft.

Rick: Okay – did you have lifejackets?

Chase: Yeah we had lifejackets so we inflated those and I tried to get some of us tied together – the ocean was running pretty rough – the breakers and whatever was coming in. But I had seen the tide timetables on the carrier for that area of the Chinese coast and the tide had been running in for about two hours and I figured '*well there's no use in trying to swim, you can't see where you're going anyway and if the tide had gone in you might as well ride the tide and see what happens*' and I don't know how long I'd rode the tide and tried to stay afloat. I'd even tried to shoot two or three shells with my 45 and they were all water logged, all they'd do is click so I unbuckled my belt and let it go. If it's no good why carry it with you? And finally I let my feet down every once in awhile and finally I felt bottom and I crawled up on to the beach and the damn waves would break over me and haul me right back out again and I thought '*well maybe I outta let the air out of my Mae West*' and I thought '*yeah then it'll drag you out and drown you*'.

So I let all the air out of one side of it and then when I...after the one wave had drug me down and I crawled as fast as I could go and I finally got up to where I was in the shrubbery and I thought *'well I must be at the high tide line'* so I just keeled over and quit – passed out and the next morning I thought – the sun came out beautiful day a few little clouds, white ones here and there and I thought *'why couldn't it have been this way yesterday'?*

Rick: Were your other crewmen anywhere around or were you just all alone at that time?

Chase: We'd gotten so far separated we couldn't even yell and hear each other and I thought *'boy this is a fine pickle – here you are 6500 miles from home, your aircraft carrier is gone, your airplane is sunk, you don't know where your crew is, your in enemy territory and you don't speak Japanese or Chinese'*.

Rick: How old were you at that time?

Chase: Oh – old enough to know better.

Rick: Early twenties I would imagine.

Chase: Forty two – I was about 24 – 21 or 22. Anyway I looked around and I could see a kind of a little cove and there was a fishing village – oh about 50 little ramshackle huts up here and a dock area and on the dock area there was two PT boats and they were flying Japanese rising sun flags and I said *'well that's ??? or Japs in the area – now where am I going to go and how am I gonna get out of here'* and as I looked back down I saw where the beach came back down around just before it went behind a little rock jetty. I thought it looked like two bodies with Mae West's' on and I thought *'well that must be two of my crew, I wonder which two it is'*. The more I thought – *'I've got to get up in the mountains, I've got to get inland, I've got to get out of here'*. But I thought *'well I better find out who that is before I go'*. So I went around and worked my way around and crossed a rice patty and out to the beach with the shrubbery about this high sparsely scattered around and I could see the bodies down there so I thought *'well I'll crawl on my hands and knees down there and then I can see who it is and then I'm going back over and*

I'm going up through this trail here up into these bamboo and then I'm going to get lost'. And as I got down there and I started to raising my head up to look out and the first thing I saw was the toes of a pair of split-toed canvas shoes and above that was a pair of laced leggings and above that was a rifle barrel looking right at me and it looked like it had a big enough bore in it to shoot golf balls and I looked on up and here was this most evil looking face I've ever seen but right on the front of his cap was a blue badge with a white 12 point star. And the intelligence they'd given us was the Japs wore a gold 5 point star. The Japanese wore a badge about that big around with a circular 12 point white star in it so that kind of slowed my heart up a little bit and I looked at him and he looked at me and finally pulled his head off the stock of the gun and spit and he says "you American – you Japanese"? and I looked at him back and I said "you Japanese – you Chinese"? And finally he raised his head and he says "me China" and I says "me American" and then he pointed at the two bodies and he says "we know, we see last night, we bury in short time – no want Japs to see". And I thought 'well fine, you're way ahead of me'.

Rick: So he could speak rudimentary English then?

Chase: Then he says...about that time I heard PT boat coming in around the bluff too and he says, "*Japanese come, you run I run up trail*". So we up the trail and get into bamboo and then we stopped and then he wanted to light a cigarette and I held his rifle for him while he did since he was a Chinese it didn't make any difference any way but then he took me up – I guess we must have hiked back a couple of miles before we got to the garrison up in the hills and there was probably 150 Chinese up there and I suppose they got along with the Japanese as long as one of them didn't start shooting at the other while it was kind of a peaceful co-existence but it still scared the hell out of me to know that those bodies were on the beach and if the Japanese found them they'd know they were Americans immediately – if the Chinese knew. I also found out going up the trail that he'd been a cab driver in Shanghai and that's where he'd learned a bit of English. He knew a lot of other languages; he even spoke pretty good Japanese. But when we got up to his compound he was the only one in the compound that spoke English so he interpreted for us with a Chinese captain that was there and then I asked him about...I kept telling him there was two more alive – two more alive! And he'd just look at me and say, "*We know, we know*". But I thought '*where are they*'? "*We know, we know*". Well finally they

brought Hallmark or Meeter in and then they brought Hallmark in and they had Hallmark on a stretcher he had his knee all tore up and couldn't walk. And he was that way until they executed him but then we got together in their compound and I said to the guys "*if we go inland we're going to run into the Jap garrison. If we can get the Chinese here to put us on a Sampan or a Junk and take us down the coast*" I said "*according to my maps and everything – Wang Chow is within 40 miles and if we can get on the open ocean and just go down the coast...*"

Tape Interrupt

Rick: Okay Chase you were talking about trying to escape up to this large Japanese or city in China hoping to get back to free China.

Chase: Well when we laid the plan out to them then the Chinese Captain that was in charge he went along with it so we got in a...I don't know if it was a Sampan or a Junk but we went on down the coast, it took about a day and a half and when we got to Wang Chow the mouth at the Wang Chow river must be two or three miles wide and there were more stuff anchored in there than you could shake a stick at. They always said that half the Chinese live on water, I think they do. But anyway the plan was that he would go in and negotiate for a power launch and then the power launch pulled up the side of us and we'd just get in it and then go on up the river. Well he changed his mind, he wanted...instead of leaving us on the boat we were on he wanted us to go inland so we argued with him for awhile and finally we decided well if he's going to do this for us maybe we just better go along with it. So we took a ??? within, we went down the dock a ways so we were on land and it was at...it was the old port of Wang Chow and he turned us over to an old Chinese guy that had been a...I don't know, he had been a Christian missionary I don't remember what church it was for now but he spoke pretty good English and he kept telling us, he said that "*we never should've trusted this Chinese*", but he said I do my job, he'd do his job. So he was trying to get some boiled rice for us and some boiled eggs and one of these little Chinese kids come rushing in and boy he was really excited and he was talking to him Chinese and he turned around and he said "*the Japanese are coming, we better hide out*". So we tried to hide out and we got up in the...Dean got down in the corner behind some old boxes and rubbish and Meeter and I climbed up in – they didn't have a ceiling in the building but they had

ceiling joists and we got back up in the dark end as far as we could go and the Japs came in and the first guy that came in is in a nice slick good looking uniform with a pair of English riding boots and he looked pretty maddy and they looked around for awhile and the other guys are all carrying submachine guns and one of them with his sword out poking around and finally they found Hallmark down in the corner and he reached down and grabbed him by the front of his shirt and pulled him up and he said, the first thing he said "*where are your two buddies*"? And my heart went down about two beats. Dean said "*two buddies? What do you mean?*" and he said it in that good of English too and he said "*oh I know there are three of you, where are the other two?*"

Rick: And so did somebody rat on you or do you think?

Chase: No, no but then the other guards they started looking around and I don't know what happened but one of them happened to just look up like that and he looked at me right in the eye and he let out a squeal and pulled that sword out and the Jap Major in command got him settled down and then he saw Meeter up there too so they made us get down out of the ceiling and told us that we are "*now prisoners of the Japanese 14th Expeditionary Army and put your hands behind your back*" and click-click and the handcuffs were on and the broom handle went between your elbows and your hands are tied here. We found out later that he and several of his buddies would come over here...well not several but a whole bunch I guess would come over here to get educated on student visas before the war and he said "*it wasn't that your school system was that good but we came over to act as spies and we had an awful lot of information about your military*". His last name was O'Hara and I used to kid him and he'd get mad at me and say, "*you're not a Japanese, you're Irish*", "*Ah, me Bonsai, me Bonsai*".

Rick: But he could speak excellent English.

Chase: Yeah, he could speak excellent English. So they took us up to their compound and then the next morning they put us in the...never did a thing, locked us in cells, the next morning they put us in a PT boat and up the coast we went and they never stopped till they got to Shanghai. They get to Shanghai, we went up the mouth of the...I think it was the Wangpoo River and boy

there were a lot of ships in there that'd been sunk, it looked like they just opened the sea cocks and let them sink. But finally we got up in there, they put us in a prison and we'd been in the prison about ten minutes I guess and the Gestapo came in and they jerked me out of there and locked me down and put me on my back and stretched my arms out and a guard put foot here and one against (with their hob nailed boots) against my jaw and one on the other side, stretched my arms out. They took a wet towel and while they were barber fashion and picked up a bucket of water over in the corner, I don't know whether it was rain drain or urine or what it was, it didn't have much of a taste to it I'll tell you, it was real bracky and started pouring that on until you about drown and then they'd pull you up and beat you on the back. You'd urp all that up; they'd throw you back down again – *“where did you come from? What are you doing here?”* I said *“according to the Geneva Convention all I have to give you is my name rank and serial number which is...”* and give it to him. He says, *“Oh the Geneva Convention, that's a lot of bologna”*. He said *“don't you know that we're fighting our own war and we're making the rules as we go and if we kill you today no one's ever going to know about it”*.

Rick: That's what he told you and he spoke good English?

Chase: Yeah, well yes several of them did but this was O'Hara.

Rick: Oh this was O'Hara that did that, okay.

Chase: I said, *“yes I don't doubt but what you could and I don't doubt but what you would”* and he said, *“You don't think much of the Japanese do you”?* And I said, *“after bombing Pearl Harbor – no”*. He says – by this time we were standing up at the corner of the table and he said, *“Oh I saw Roosevelt”* oh he said, *“that Roosevelt was crazy. He had a bad leg he had a bad mind too”* and I just plowed him as hard as I could hit him.

Rick: With your fist?

Chase: With my fist. Down he went and as he went down he let out a war hoop and there was about four guards that came through that door and I'm telling you I really caught hell. I learned to be a little more civil.

Rick: What did they do to you after that?

Chase: Oh they beat you. They put bamboo poles behind your knees about three or four inches in diameter and then kneel you down on that and then put their foot on your hip and then jump up and down and just spread your knee joints apart. They'd take a...they'd set you down, put you by a table and put your hand out and a guy would sit on your arm. They'd put bamboo splints like toothpicks under your fingernails and then they'd light them on fire.

Rick: They did this to you?

Chase: Took your shoes off and they'd pick up charcoal out of the brazier and burn the bottoms of your feet. They even threatened to brand me – *'I'm going to put your big name right on your stomach'*.

Rick: And were they asking you questions all the time?

Chase: Asking you questions all the time.

Rick: And you were still giving your name rank and serial number?

Chase: The same questions – *'where did you come from'*? and the first Japanese word I learned is *'watashi, wakarimasen'* – *'I don't understand, I don't know'*. And they'd ask me a question and I'd say *'watashi wakarimasen'* – *'whoosh, whoosh, whoosh'*. Well it went on and went on and finally he said *"I guess we'll take you out and execute you if you're not going to talk"*. So they took me out of the compound and out to a brick wall. It was about 20 feet high and I noticed all down the line about every six feet there was a couple of links of chain with a handcuff hanging on it. They backed me up to the wall and stretched my arms out and put the handcuffs

on, come out and put a blindfold on and I thought *'well this is it'* and then I heard a squad march out and their hobnails on that flagstone path and when they stopped you could hear their rifle butts hit the ground and I thought *'well I guess it's really aim fire and that's it'* and I thought *'who in the hell will ever know what happened? How far we got. I'd like to have somebody know that at least we tried'* and I'm standing there thinking about all these things – *'what will my mother think? What'll my poor dad do?'* and finally O'Hara walked over with a smirk on his face and *'ha ha'* he said *"don't you know we're Knights of the Bushido of the Order of the Rising Sun? We don't execute at sundown, we execute at sunrise, if you haven't told us by morning what we want to know we'll execute you in the morning"*. And they took me back in the cell, put the handcuffs on and then put them up over a peg on the wall so my toes barely touched the floor. I hung there all night I don't know how long I was to or where I was, I was I guess mostly out yonder somewhere but the next morning they came and I thought *'these are persistent little buggers'*. They let me down and when my arms went down I thought they both were going to come off at the shoulders. They took me back out and pegged me up the wall again. This time they didn't march up with a firing squad but he stood there talking to another officer and he was talking in Japanese and then finally another guy came out and yelled at him and he walked over and they said something and then O'Hara came over and jerked the blind fold off and unhandcuffed me he says *"you're lucky, you got a last reprieve. We're going to fly you back to Tokyo to the MP Headquarters for Interrogation"* and about that time somebody behind him said *"and I'll bet you talk then"*. And I thought *'oh brother'*. So they loaded us up and hauled us back to Tokyo.

Rick: All three of you?

Chase: Yep. Well when we got to Tokyo we found out the other five that they captured 150 miles further inland – they'd already flown them in to Tokyo, the other crew so then there was eight of us. The two of mine that died that left three of us and there was the other full crew.

Rick: How did you get to Tokyo from there? Did you fly?

Chase: Oh it was a twin engine airplane about like the C47 – a Goony Bird. And when they got there yeah it surprised him he said, “*you don’t know where you’re at do you*”? And I said “*Yeah I’m back in Tokyo*” and he says, “*How did you know that*”? And I said “*well because the sun was over here when I was flying that way and it took about so many hours according to my mind and that’s just the distance between Shanghai and Tokyo*”.

Rick: And this is still O’Hara that is with you?

Chase: Yeah. So then they started...we went through the whole damn thing again and boy they put me on a table then and stretched me out and put cuffs around each hand and ankle and one under my chin and stretched me out – hand, arm, head the whole works and just pulled my body up tight off of the table. And I thought ‘*good Lord you’re going to pull me apart*’. And I still kept telling him “*name rank and serial number – that’s all I’ve got*” and he said “*oh your friends have been talking to me and they told me all about it*” and he said “*but I know where you’re coming from*” and I said “*you do*”? And he said “*yeah*” and he said “*I know how many of you there are*” and he said “*I know the whole story*” and I said “*you tell me and then I’ll let you know whether you’re right or not*”.

Rick: And did they feed you regularly at this?

Chase: He wouldn’t do. So then they took me out – this had gone on now for about (oh yeah they’d feed you, hell a little cupful. You got one cupful of tea with each meal. They’d have to boil the water. So they put tea in it and we kept telling them “*don’t put anything in it, just boil the water*”. Tea makes you more thirsty than you are to start with and the little bowl of slop like I used to slop the pigs with, I guess they had a barrel they dipped it out of cause it had fish heads in it and fish eyes and the fins and the guts and grass and seaweed and potato peelings or whatever – water lily roots and whatever they could put together).

Rick: How many times a day did you get that?

Chase: Twice while we were in Tokyo.

Rick: All right well let's take us back then.

Chase: So then they took me one night they took me in to interrogate – it wasn't one night I guess it was one day or afternoon – they took me in interrogation and they had a stack of maps and charts about that high that looked like they were wet and soggy and they were sitting on the end of the table and they set me down right by them and I looked at them and I thought *'um hum this looks like some of the mercader charts we made up on the carrier that the guys used to navigate on'*. And he turned one over and then he'd turn another one over and then he'd turn another one over and then he put his finger up here and he says, *"What's a hornet"*? Here's this gold silhouette of an aircraft carrier and right under it's stamped *'USS Hornet'*. And he said, *"What's a hornet"*? Well I give him my rendition of a bee, a hornet, it stings you, it's a bee that fly's you know and he didn't say anything. They were all watching me to see what my reflexes were. He turned over a couple more and here was a piece of typed paper that had the whole damn crew roster on it – every crew from crew number one to crew 16 by name, rank and serial number and crew position. And he went down to Doolittle's name and put his finger at it and said, *"do you know this guy"*? And I said *"Yeah I know him"* and he said, *"I thought you would, we captured him several days ago and we killed him"* and I said *"oh you did"*? And then he went down that list a little bit further and right under my name and he put his finger and he says, *"I know you know this guy"*.

Rick: So he knew who you were then?

Chase: And I said, *"Yes, I know that guy"* so then the roof caved in. *"You lying SOB why don't you tell us what the hell's going on? You know that you left an aircraft carrier. How many ships were in the convoy? How big was the aircraft carrier? How much fuel did it have on it? How many guns? What was the caliber of the gun and placements"*? Oh I'm telling you right down the line and I just said *"watashi wakarimasen"*. And I'd say, *"Sorry I'm not a navy man, I don't know"*. So then about two days later they took me out for interrogation and then he said, *"I want to show you now how much intelligence we have on the USS Hornet"*. They had pictures in dry dock in New Jersey – I don't remember what town it was – Norfolk where they built the carrier.

They had pictures from the day they laid the keel until the night of the christening of the carrier. They even had pictures of the navy guy in dress uniform dancing with their wives on the hangar deck. So when I got back to my cell I got the old code going and I told the guys *“don’t take anymore rough stuff, tell them anything they want to know, they already know”*.

Rick: They know it all just about.

Chase: There’d be no use. So then it went on and they finally decided they was going to take us back to Shanghai. We didn’t know that but they came in and buttoned us up and took us back to Shanghai. Then they held court after we got back to Shanghai; they took the eight of us in to court. The court convened, they conducted the whole court in Japanese, the interpreter wouldn’t tell me a word of what was going on and by then I guess O’Hara probably stayed in Tokyo because I never saw him anymore. But they conducted it all in Japanese, when they got through they took us back to our cells and I asked the interpreter what’s going on and he just said *“you’ll know in good time, when it’s right to know you’ll know”* and the next day I asked him – they took five of us out, they didn’t have three they had the five of us. They held another tribunal and they told us through this one with the interpreter they told us that we had been ordered for execution as war criminals but due to the virtues of the Emperor and his niceness that he had saw fit to commute it to life imprisonment. Therefore we had a sentence of life imprisonment with special treatment. The special treatment was no work detail, no correspondence out or in, no communal living (no getting together), solitary confinement and obey the court rules and the guards. They took us back and put us in solitary confinement and I thought *‘well this is nice’*, but that’s what happened and we stayed in solitary for two years and nine months.

Rick: In solitary confinement. They let you out to exercise at all or?

Chase: Oh yeah if the guards felt like it they’d let you out to exercise but hell we were...we had lost so much weight we didn’t want to exercise, you couldn’t. They’d take you out, they’d want to practice their Judo with you and I found out – I told the guys *“when they want to practice Judo with you as soon as they grab a hold of you just go limp and fall toward them and when*

they start backing up if you've got enough balance on one foot put your other heel behind him and push him over and then land on him".

Rick: And your meals, did they improve at all or were they that same?

Chase: Never any difference and then more or less up to us and time went on and oh we could see over the fence in Nan King where they had a big walled in area and they'd made one little area up here they put a wall around. The big wall was about 20 feet high and I think this one was probably 15 but they had one building in it and that's where they housed us. All the rest of this building...then they had a big parade ground but most of the area they had I would imagine 5 to 700 Japanese soldiers, guys that had goofed up somewhere in the service and they'd come in there and they'd march them around and if they catch them out of step or something they'd kick them off their feet and then stand there and kick his damn ribs in. I've seen them haul them off the parade grounds with...on a liter and I don't know if they'd kicked their ribs in and killed them or what. Lord knows they were mean enough to do it. And the way they treated their women is out of this world – when they moved us around on the train, the way they treated the women – slap them and beat them and punch them around. If I could've gotten my hands loose I'd have gotten killed but I would've killed someone else.

Rick: This was their Japanese wives and girlfriends and stuff?

Chase: Well it was Japanese women. It's when they moved us from Tokyo down to Osaka to put us on the boat to take us back to China. So it went on and we're pretty much on our own and then when Meeter died, before he died they let us out in the yard to exercise and Bob was really sick, he couldn't hardly walk and he'd walk out the back steps and he was sitting there and I was talking to him trying to get a word in to see...I kept telling him, I thought well maybe I'd chastise him a little bit and make him mad and maybe he'd come out of it a little bit. Cause he said to me, he said *"why don't you pray to your god about me"*, he said *"I prayed to mine and he's not doing me any good"* and I said *"oh come on Bob you're more of a Christian than that"* I said *"you've gotta get mad, you've gotta get mean"*. I said, *"look at all the good things you've done in your life and think about your parents what they've done"* and I said *"you're not going*

to leave us now are you”? Well the guard came over and he wanted me...he kept telling me to *“Speak in Japanese”* because by that time we’d picked up a pretty good amount of the lingo, that with sign language and one thing and another. He said *“speak in Japanese so I can understand what you’re talking about”* and I was really teed off and I whirled around and hooked him one and about knocked him on his back and when he lit his chin was clear out here and I thought *‘oh hell, you could’ve done anything but that’*. So I figured *‘well I know what’s coming’* so I went back to my cell and they came in and put the old belt on and the two links of chain and the handcuffs and put them on and I wore that thing down here with my hands for 21 days and when they’d slide my food in I’d have to root it over to the wall and then get down in and soup it out of the bowl like...

Rick: You had to wear that for 21 days – that was your punishment for...what were the hygiene, the restroom facilities like, I mean just a bucket or?

Chase: Oh yeah, the banjo the toilet it was in the corner of the cell there was about a three foot cement block that had a little oblong hole in it and that’s what you squatted over and then from outside the building you pulled that can out and took it and dumped it in a barrel and then they put it in the honey bucket and put it on their rice crop.

Rick: That was it huh? Well then tell me how...where you were when the war ended and leading up to the atomic bombs and stuff.

Chase: Well they had moved us up to Peking probably, I’m not sure of the date on that but I think it was about June because the war ended in August and I don’t know why...well I know now why they did, I didn’t at the time but they put us in a big prison out on East Haddiman Street right next to the Forbidden City. Where those big gold, they’re not gold roofed, the copper roofed buildings are and that prison would hold 10,000 prisoners. They had a lot of British up there and I don’t know who else and they had Cunningham that had been taken off – he was the last navy command on Wake Island. It had several marines that had been on the Embassy guard and we were still in solitary confinement up there but one day I heard a noise out in the hall and I looked out and I could see they looked like GI’s and I looked again and they

looked like...they had khaki uniforms on but they all had beards and it looked like they could stand a shower and a shave and they got up to my door and I noticed another thing they had one Japanese with them and I thought *'oh hell is this a bunch of subversive Americans now, they're going to come here and do us in'* because it looked awful funny to have that Japanese with them and they opened the door and the guy that opened the door looked at me and he said *"are you an American"*? I couldn't say a word – hell I hadn't talked to anybody for so long and I figured *'if I ever get out of this hell hole I'll talk for ever'*, so finally I got my voice and I said *"yes, I'm an American"*. My hair was long enough I could just pull it this way and pull it right down over my face – lice, mites, flea bites, dirty, scurvy and he said *"where were you taken a prisoner"* and I said (it was a Major) and I said *"I was taken a prisoner in Shanghai but I was originally was with a fellow named Jimmy Doolittle who flew B25's off an aircraft carrier the USS Hornet and bombed Japan on the 18th of April back in 1942"* and he looked at me for a minute and he looked at his guys and he says *"you ought to watch him he's clear off his trolley. Those guys were all executed years ago"* and I said *"like hell they were there's three more of them down the hall here"*. And I guess by then they'd heard me speaking English to somebody else speaking English and they started yelling. So we went down the hall and sure enough there's three more of them there because by then Meeter had died so there was only four of us left. But they turned us loose and then...

Rick: So did the guy tell you that the war was over then or?

Chase: Yeah he said *"the war is over, let's go home"*. Well by then it was the 21st of August, it was a week after VJ Day and we found out later that the OSS knew that we were in there and they'd been trailing us, they knew that there was four raiders left. They didn't know who they were, they couldn't keep track of the names but they knew that we were in Peking and guys that were in there from the OSS, the Japanese knew they were in there and they knew the Japs knew it so they holed up. But the Japanese then – General Tsatsuta he said to Major Nichols that was head of the OSS Rescue Team, he said *"yes I know that they were on the original bombing on Japan and I know that they are prisoners of war but I also know that their sentence is life imprisonment and they will fulfill their sentence"* and one of the guys on the rescue team says *"after Major Nichols bounced him a couple of times he decided well maybe the war was over"*

and maybe he should let us go". So then from there out of China we went. We went down to Chunking and talked to intelligence and then came home, went through the Walter Reed but when we got to the Walter Reed that was on the 4th of September then in '45 I weighed 103 pounds.

Rick: After that prisoner...take me back there again that point, when did you first have an American meal and where did they take you immediately after you left that prison?

Chase: Oh as soon as we got out of that prison they took us in and they – oh they must have had 300 Britishers in their British civilians that they had in that compound too. They cooked up a good old Irish stew and I'm telling you I ate until it about got out of my ears.

Rick: And prior to that did you think you were going to spend your life there and that you'd never come back or did you always have some hope?

Chase: I never did give up...for some reason or other that some day the pendulum was going to swing the other way. But it was getting close and when I think of it now there was only three of us that could fly back. George had had Berry Berry and Dysentery until he was so sick he was 90 percent out of his mind even and Doc Junior E. Rich from Ogden came back with him. They brought him back across the Pacific, they wouldn't let him fly out but they wanted to get us down and talk to intelligence and they wanted to get us back to intelligence in Washington DC to see what to do. So they didn't fly him out – Doc Junior E. Rich came back with him and he told me later that George tried to commit suicide several times on the boat coming over and that he'd think they'd try to be nice to him and he wouldn't comply and then they'd get a little bit rough with him and then he'd know they were subversives and then he'd start getting real violent well then they put a straight jacket on him then he knew they were working for the Japanese. It was just a comedy of errors but he did get over it enough that he got married and got three children and he worked for the Civil Service up at Rock Island until about '84, '85 I think when he finally passed away with a heart attack.

Rick: Well you know the Doolittle Raid has become very famous as you know and the impact on the morale has been very significant. When did you first realize...did you realize early on that it was going to be that significant or was it after you got back and...

Chase: Well, no...oh yeah years after I got back I knew it was significant enough that we were going to hit Japan in retaliation and I hoped that we'd wake them up enough that they'd pull some of their troops out of the South Pacific and I'd also hoped that it would give America a jab in the arm. We really wouldn't have been as low in warfare islands as we were if we hadn't of supplied the British the way we did and if we hadn't of supplied the British the way we did that war may have gone the other way too. It's hard to tell, you can't second guess it. But never in my wildest dreams did I ever think the Doolittle raid would really accomplish all and mean what it did.

Rick: Yeah it would be hard at that point. Well Chase...

Chase: I've often said *"if I would have known Dunkirk, D-Day, anything else – everything that went on during the war. If I could've picked my one little battle I couldn't have picked a better one"*.

Rick: Well that's interesting. Chase thanks so much for sharing these experiences and we're honored to be here and you did a great job! You're mind is just as good as it was when you were 21 years old it sounds to me.

Chase: Well it's gotten just a little bit smarter.

Rick: Well probably but you certainly haven't forgotten much. Thanks again.

Tape Interrupt

Rick: Tell us about your thoughts about America and...

Chase: Well America is no doubt the most beautiful, the most educated, the most free, the most congenial place to live in the world. And if anyone who has a citizenship it was given to them, even if they applied for it and was tested and took it but most of us that were born here it was given to us with no questions asked. I think we have an obligation that we should do what this country wants us to do and I think the democratic way of life is the only way to live and I'm tickled to death that Bush is getting something started over in Iraq. If he can get a democracy started in the mid east we have really, really, really accomplished something because I know it will spread from there. Our own democracy is not all entirely clear nor clean. After Abe Lincoln freed the slaves it took about 12 years or three or four different presidencies before we really got the democracy to work. But it will work and I don't think you can put church and state together like the Iraqi's are trying to do.

Rick: Those are interesting comments and I might add that our freedoms, the last 60 years have been paid for with a very high price and you're a big part of that and for those of us who have benefited we thank you so much for being such a hero to us. I know that you don't regard yourself as a hero but we all do and on behalf of our generation we thank you.

Chase: Well I consider myself a survivor but my buddies who were executed are the hero's.

Rick: Yeah I understand. Thanks again it was just...the story was great Chase and we really appreciate your efforts and glad you're still with us.

Chase: Well I'd like to tell anybody – you don't really know what your fate is but when you make out some of it and you kind of got an idea what it is it isn't really what your fate does to you its what you do with your fate.

Rick: Well that's very sound advice.

Chase: But I think yes, I give 90 percent of the credit for everything that I am as to the way I was born and raised and I don't think if I would have given up for one inch that I would have ever come back from over there.

Rick: Well that's interesting, I've had others tell me that that they just never gave up and especially those that were captured by the Japanese it was such a brutal course of events you know.

Chase: That's another thing the world needs to look at too. We had a hard time with Germany and we had a hard time with Japan but when they finally conceded and let us in and let us help set up some kind of a government, look where they're at now. And I think if the Iraqi's and the Palestinians and the Pakistanians and all the rest of that gang over there will wake up for a short time. I don't think we've got a man in the United States that would deliberately tie a bomb to himself and go out and set it off to kill people. That is what '*watashi wakarimasen*' means – I don't understand.

Rick: Well that's interesting but we've had 60 years of peace and prosperity thanks to those 292,000 that gave their lives and nearly 100,000 besides that that died of illness and other means during the war so...

Chase: Well I'll tell you, the cold years and some of the leaders Russia had – Khrushchev for one, we've come within that fine line of putting A-bombs all over the world and I know it – I stayed in until '61 and I spent 13 years in strategic air command with nothing but A-bombs, A-bombs, A-bombs.

Rick: With the B52's flying over the Soviet Union and all over.

Chase: There's a book lying over on that table '*Arc Light One*' and it's the plans for the original bomb raid on Vietnam and if we would have pulled it off the war would have never started. They had 30 B52's go over Hanoi and Haiphong at 500 feet – if you know what that commotion would do, then climb up to altitude and bomb out the airport. They were only carrying about (30 aircraft) it would have been about 1500 bombs and they could have been pretty good size.

Rick: Yeah there's a lot of events that if they had taken place a little differently....

Chase: Yet they sat on Guam and waited and waited and waited and finally (I don't know if you'd call him a tactician or what) McNamara and LBJ folded up.

Rick: And we ended up losing 58,000 men over in Vietnam.