



Roy Tew

United States Army Air Corps

1st Lieutenant

Pacific Theater

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Interviewer:

Rick Randle

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

Rick: Roy, we're really happy to have you with us. Will you just state your name and spell it for us.

Roy: My name is Roy, middle initial E, Tew.

Rick: Tell us about when you first joined up in the service.

Roy: When I first joined up... I joined up because I had some friends and we wanted to be together and we thought we might but it only lasted for a short time. But we joined the Air Force. We thought we'd rather be in the Air Force than the infantry and we first joined up - our basic training was in Kearns, Utah and I remember so much about my sunburn, that was the main thing. Of course we did a lot of hiking and marching and shooting of guns, which was fun for us because we were from small-town Mapleton, Utah and we loved to hunting and so forth, so that was fun.

Rick: And then where did you go from Kearns?

Roy: I went to what's called CTD's, College Training Detachment at Pullman Washington, Washington State University where we took some courses on a lot of different things. And also we had a chance to fly ten hours in a Piper Cub and my instructor was a lady and we liked it there very much.

Rick: And when did you realize what plane you were going to be in and what your position was going to be?

Roy: Well, from there we went to Santa Ana Army Air Base in Santa Ana, California, which was classification. And at classification, that's where we decided and they decided what our position would be. I actually requested to be a navigator and that's what I ended up being, a navigator. And of course they told us we probably would be on B-29's because they were then the planes that could fly the longest and farthest and used in the Pacific and flew out of the Mariana's back and forth to Japan on twelve to eighteen hour missions. They were the only plane that could fly that far at that time. They were the biggest plane in the Air Force and had some innovations like remote control guns and pressurized cabins, which was very nice. The others had to freeze. We could keep warm even at altitude.

Rick: So what was your first experience on a B-29 and give us as much detail as you can about the inside and your position and so forth.

Roy: The B-29 had two bomb bays. There was a tunnel that went over the bomb bays, maybe two and a half or three feet in diameter that, to get to the front to the back, you had to crawl through that tunnel, which was probably thirty to thirty-five feet long. Right up front of course, was the bombardier. He was right in the nose and had a lot of glass so you could see the bomb. Right behind him were the pilot and the co-pilot. The pilot was called the airplane commander in that particular plane. So if I speak of the airplane commander, I'm talking about the first pilot. Right behind the first pilot in the next compartment, I sat there at a small little table and had a

window about a foot and a half maybe, square. And on the other side of two gun turrets that were right there between the radio operator and myself, we would ride in that little compartment and just to the right and forward was the engineer—the flight engineer. He had a lot of controls of the instruments and settings that the pilot didn't need to take care of. He helped with all of that of course—fuel consumption and so forth. And then in the back, of course, were two gunners, one right and one left and then the top gunner called the CFC man. And the top gunner could take controls of all the guns on the plane pretty much if he wanted to. He was the primary gunner, then the right and the left. They had remote controls that they could shoot, one out the right and the other out the left. Behind him was the radar operator who had a radar screen and did a lot of things in terms of even aiding in the bomb runs at times when he bombed by radar. In addition, I had a radar screen as well on my desk and we coordinated with the bombardier when we were flying missions that required radar bombing, which might have been in a lot of clouds where we couldn't see. If at night when we couldn't see, other than seeing a lot of lights, we would use radar and I would take the course and maybe the radar man would take the closure rate. This would all be notified by earphones that we had to the bombardier and he would set this into his bombsight and the bombsight would actually drop the bombs. It would fly the plane the last little bit, and would drop the bombs.

Rick: Your first experience with a B-29 was in California then?

Roy: No. My first experience was in Pyote, Texas where our crew was put together and we started our training. One of the notable experiences there was, one morning we were taking off for a training mission and we had a few practice bombs onboard and of course everybody was going to be learning their own individual talent or assignment. The bombardier would do his, I would do navigation, and pilots were learning to fly. We had a man onboard, Captain Woods who came from overseas. He was on Manila when they first bombed Manila, and he was teaching our pilots how to fly the plane. The most notable experience was one morning we took off and we got about 100 feet off the ground, maybe about 150 and we lost one engine. Before we went very far we lost another engine, so then we thought we could turn and land on another runway. We were so close to the ground we couldn't do that so we crossed the road. I remember looking down and seeing a car in the road down there and the power lines. To make a long story short we ended up crashing out in the desert at night. Luckily the bombs were not armed so we just slid along the ground and the plane broke open where the left and right gunners were and they were able to just walk out and the rest of us out front we had to dive out of those little foot and a half square windows. Of course it was about six feet to the ground and the bombardier broke his arm and he was a married man, and he refused to fly again so we had to get a new bombardier. But we started that out before we even got overseas.

Rick: Were there any other crashes while you were training with other crews?

Roy: No, but in navigation school (I took my navigation school at Hondo, Texas) and we did have some crashes there that we weren't involved with but we had one that happened where two planes hit together and that was just in training there at navigation school.

Rick: Did you fly your B-29 overseas?

Roy: We did. I also went to radar and gunnery school in Las Vegas, Nevada and radar school at Boca Raton, Florida. Then we came back and were assigned to a crew at Pyote and from there we picked up a plane in Kearney, Nebraska—a brand new airplane—and flew into California, and from there we took off and flew over San Francisco and looked down and it looked like a big jewel down there the lights were so beautiful. We crossed the Pacific to Honolulu. Of course we spent the night at Honolulu. From Honolulu we flew on to Quadulan. On the way we passed a little island like Mijit Island, which proved to be a navigation point there that I was happy to see. We landed at Quadulan, and that happened to be the day that President Roosevelt died, I remember that. And then from there we flew on to Guam, and Guam of course is in the Mariana's and Saipan, Tinian and Guam. Guam is the farthest island away from Japan. Of course when we got there we started flying missions.

Rick: So you were stationed on Guam and flew most of your missions out of Guam?

Roy: We flew all of them out of Guam.

Rick: Tell us what a typical mission was like—getting up and going through the whole day.

Roy: We'd get up and put on our flight clothes, then go down to the flight line and of course have breakfast.

Rick: What time of day would you be getting up?

Roy: Well, it might be any time of the day. It might even be night. It depended on the mission. So some missions we flew at night, some we flew in the daytime. In the daytime missions we'd usually be flying in formations, and the night missions a lot of times we were alone, meaning that we were with no other planes except they were up there flying above you and you could get dropped on by some of their bombs, and these were incendiary raids when they did that. Of course, we'd wait until they were all ready and we'd go out on the flight line, I mean we would taxi out to the runway and we were taking off from two different runways on one-minute intervals. And of course we had to have a long runway because we were heavily loaded with gasoline and bombs and I remember—I might just mention the fact that after awhile I began to, as we'd taxi out to the runway, I just kind of felt a hate for this airplane when I realized what we were doing bombing civilians up there in Japan—innocent people. I'm sorry. I just couldn't take it hardly, could hardly take it! I feel like I just didn't like what we were doing. I guess the hate for the plane—I guess I was trying to transfer some of the guilt I was feeling for doing this, but of course it was war and it was our job to do this whether we liked it or not. And then of course we'd fly these missions that would be 18 hours at the longest and 12 at the shortest—somewhere in that range. And the Marines had captured Iwo Jima, which was a very great thing for us because that gave us a place to land. We landed there maybe four or five or six times in the 25 missions that we flew, actually the 26 counting one mission that was not a bombing mission, it was to drop supplies to our prisoners of war down there right after the war.

Rick: Did you start out flying incendiaries, or did you drop other kinds of bombs?

Roy: We started out mostly flying missions that we carried demolition bombs. Most of these first missions were on the southern island of Japan, there a Kyushu because the planes on those airfields that we were bombing were of course bombing the ships that were around the invasion of Okinawa. So we were trying to help them out by destroying some of their airfields. Later, of course, we bombed a lot of other military targets in various cities and it proved that we didn't—in other words—the results weren't as good as General LaMay wanted, so initially we even dropped 2400 pound bombs once and you could even feel the explosion right up in the air as high as we were. But he decided that we would go to a different format on bombing, in other words we'd go to dropping incendiaries and with incendiaries it's not exactly a precision bombing, it's a bombing of areas. So you would start fires in the different cities where you bomb and it would create firestorms. One day the fires were already started, and the smoke was higher than we were, at around 23,000 feet and the smoke was way above us and it really interfered with the bombing and we didn't have very good results with that one. After that we mostly flew incendiary raids and had very good results. In fact on March 9—I did not fly on that raid—but on March 9th that incendiary raid on Tokyo killed more people than either of the atomic bombs initially. Not many people know that, but it's true and I'm not making it up.

Rick: I know that's true. Briefly describe how these incendiary bombs work. Do they explode in the air?

Roy: They came out in big clusters and then, as you say, they explode into individual little (I don't know how many bombs were there) but probably hundreds and hundreds. Each individual plane there would be these little napalm bombs that would start the fires and scatter all over. Oh those firestorms are something else. You could see down in the cities and see the streets burning, and imagine the people running for cover and not being able to get out. There were over 100,000 people killed in that March 9th raid.

Rick: Tell us some of the close, terror-filled experiences that you had.

Roy: First, I'll tell you two where we had individuals in our crew killed. We were going over to Yokohama on a raid that was not too far from the emperors palace and they told us not to bomb that of course, and we were careful not to do that but we were heading over the target and we got on the bomb run and we got caught in the search lights. Well, we had to continue our bomb run, and we did, and we dropped our bombs and immediately after dropping our bombs we still had our bomb bay doors open, we got a burst of flak right in our bomb bays. This burst of flak went through the bulkhead, the rear bulkhead of the rear bomb bay and went through the head of our left waist gunner (he had on a flak helmet), went right through his head and out the other side and killed him instantly. That was the 29th of May, and we held his funeral on Guam and buried him there on Guam on Memorial Day. Larry Vanderwerk was his name, a very nice man. Whenever I hear taps, it makes me go back and think of that day that we held that military funeral. The next one was one morning we were taking off in the dark and we just barely left the end of the runway and we got about 800 feet in the air and we lost number one engine and that made us unable to fly because we had some gas tanks even in the bomb bays along with a full bomb load and so we tried to salvo the bombs and the front bomb bay went, but the rear bombs didn't. That put us in a very tail-heavy position, which made us unable to fly. So the pilot was calling the tower and saying, "We're going down" which probably wouldn't have done any good

anyway. We were out there over the ocean and I doubt that if it had crashed that no one would be able to find us anyway. So what happened was the bombardier knew what the reason was why those bombs didn't go on the rear bomb bay so he called back through that tube I described earlier, that thirty to thirty-five foot tube and he went out in the bomb bay and connected a cannon plug. Of course we called up to the pilot and try to salvo the bombs again and this time they went, so now we could fly. As we were going along, I was looking at my altimeter and mine said 75 feet above the water—that's not even across the road. My engineer said that his said 50 feet, but it doesn't matter if it's that or 200 feet, it's mighty close to the ocean when you're going along at night and not able to fly. When we could fly, we'd climb back up to 1700 feet and kind of go over the right of the island because there were so many planes still taking off—four runways, two at north field and two and north-west field, and so we had to avoid them. We got over just right over the island at about 1700 feet and we lost another engine. Well, before that we called the tower and said, "What shall we do?" and they said, (Of course we couldn't go back and land on the runways where they were taking off), so they said, "Stay up there and burn that gas off because we don't want you landing with that much gas." So we decided to do that. Well, then we lost the other engine so the pilot said, "Prepare to bail out." Well, we all got our chutes on and lined up at the bomb bay doors, and opened the hatch and the bomb bay doors were open. I still had my headphones on and my radio operator was right in front of me ready to bail out, then the pilot said, "Wait a minute, wait a minute." And so he said that one of the other airfields—I think it was Harmon airfield, they were the ones that flew weather missions—they flipped their lights on and off and so he decided that maybe we could make it to the end of the runway there, so that is what we did. We landed a pretty hot landing, if I remember. We kind of burned some tires but we got on the ground and then we found that our tail gunner had bailed out. His name was Bernard Kazinski, he was a Russian, and he had bailed out over the water apparently, and of course we searched for him the next day, but it's a big ocean and we never could find him, so we lost him. And of course as we got out of the plane too, that engine that had failed on the first number one engine, it had stripped because of the fact that it had turned up to high RPM, broke the tachometers and it had stripped all the planetary gears, and you could just take the prop and run it through just by hand real easy. And so it really stripped all the gears. Anyway we were happy to be on the ground, but we were sure sorry we could not find our tail gunner.

Rick: That was a pretty close call. If you guys had all bailed out the chances of you wouldn't have survived either.

Roy: I wouldn't be here if we had bailed out. If we had bailed out we would not have been here. We had other experiences if you want me to tell those.

Rick: I'd love to hear them.

Roy: Another incident was... I have these dates and names.

Rick: You had the same commander and the same crew during all of these 26 missions?

Roy: We did, except we did have replacements for the two who were killed and that was the only change. I might say in regards to some of the incendiary missions that we flew, we

broadcast to the Japanese people, while we were on our way, the cities that we were going to bomb. We didn't just tell them what city we were going to bomb, we told them maybe four or five other cities so that they would evacuate and of course a lot of their war materials were done in the home. They manufactured a lot of parts and so by getting these people out of the city for the evening or the night, why then they'd lose some sleep and it might disrupt the war effort a little bit. But it was at least a good thing that they could get out and save their lives if they took it seriously, and I'm sure they did after quite a few raids.

Rick: Now you mentioned that one crew-member died, but you didn't tell us how the other one died.

Roy: Well, I told you how two died. Those were two different missions. The airplane commander stayed in, he didn't stay in, but he re-joined and went to Vietnam and he was killed in Vietnam, shot down, and his body was not found until just a few years ago. When they did find it, they shipped him back to the states here and buried him in Arlington Cemetery in Washington, D.C. On August 6, 1945 we bombed Toyokawa naval airbase and we thought this would be an easy mission. So my radio operator had a camera and he asked me to take a picture of bombs away. So I was sitting there looking out of this tiny window and we were experiencing some flak and so the flak hit us right in the propeller hub of number one engine. Of course we wouldn't feather it, and we lost all of the oil pressure—about 80 gallons of oil went out over the engine according to our engineer, and we were in formation at the time flying in a daylight raid and we fell back and there was another plane, an M-13 that fell back with us and helped protect us as we continued on our bomb run, dropped our bombs and then he went with us until we left the coast. It might be interesting to note that we had what were called Super Dumbos at the time—they were B-29's out flying over off the coast of Japan over our submarine that was down under the water of course. If we had to ditch, in other words we couldn't make it and fly, we could ditch beside that submarine and be picked up. And we had one of our crews there that had that very experience, close friends of ours, and we knew they had been picked up right shortly after we got back from the mission because by radio they had transmitted the fact that they had picked up this group, so part of them is all. So that was good, and we didn't have to ditch there but we continued on to fly and went down to an island just north of Iwo Jima, I think it was called Kita Iwo Jima. There the number one prop flew right off the engine. Now these propellers were huge—they were 17 feet from tip to tip—that's twice as high as an eight-foot ceiling plus one foot. And they were very heavy. Luckily this was an outboard—number one. If it had been an inboard engine it would have hit the tail, and we certainly wouldn't be here. When we got back to Iwo we thought, "Well, we'll go onto Guam, it's only another 750 miles, something like that, in that neighborhood." We had three engines, but the pilot started having problems with the controls a little bit, actually the automatic pilot, and we discovered that one of the control cables had been severed. So we decided to go back to Iwo and land so we were only about 75 miles south of there. So we went back to Iwo and we made our approach to land and we couldn't get our nose-gear down, our landing gear, so we had to go around and we used all of the emergency measures that we could and we still couldn't get it down—crank it down manually or anything, so we couldn't get the nose-wheel down. And as we were flying around there we watched another crew bail out right there and their plane just circled around and hit right next to a ship in the bay there on Iwo Jima. We called the tower and asked them what we should do. They said, "Well, you can take your choice, you can bail out or you can land without the nose-

wheel." So we all decided we'd land without the nose-wheel. So most of us that could, we tried to keep the tail down as long as we could before it would hit the runway. This worked pretty good, but of course it eventually hit the runway and we skidded in on our nose and it bent the tips of the propellers some. But we came to a stop and they were there with the fire trucks and everything. They were spraying this one engine. The prop had come off and we hadn't used it for hours. It was the coolest engine we had, but they were cooling it off and spraying it in case of fire. Anyway, we survived that o.k., and of course that plane was ruined so we had to fly back to Guam and use another plane on the other missions. But while we were there, we stayed overnight and the next day we went to the officer's club which was a tent in the sand, to have some ice-cream, that powdered ice-cream they said they had down there, so we went down there, but while there the radio was on and we heard, President Truman had announced that they had dropped the atomic bomb. So this was actually the day the atomic bomb was dropped. And of course we had mixed feelings about that. We thought, at least I thought that the war would end fairly soon even if they had not dropped either one of the bombs, because we were getting stronger all the time. We had more planes. We were having much success now and they were not giving us much trouble on the anti-aircraft and the fighter planes attacking us as they were before, so we had it going for us and we didn't feel like really that they needed to drop that bomb, well, I didn't anyway, and some of them did of course. But the thing of it is, I still feel I wish they had never invented that bomb because then we wouldn't be living under the threat of, and our future generations, under the threat of that nuclear attack of either a missile or whatever.

Rick: Was that your last mission then?

Roy: No, it was not the last mission. Of course they dropped one more bomb three days later. That was the second atomic bomb, but even after that there was one more mission flown. In fact they made a story out of it, and it's on TV called "The Last Mission." And we were going on that mission, and I don't remember where we were going to because we got half way to Iwo Jima and we lost all of the oil out of #2 engine and of course we had to feather it. We could feather that one so that we had to drop our bombs in the ocean, and as I remember they burned on the water—these incendiaries. I may be wrong, but that's what my memory says. I think that some of planes even radioed back to Guam and said that there's a B-29 down there on the ocean on fire which wasn't the correct thing, it was the bombs. So we decided at that point to turn around. As I said, we'd lost all the oil out of number two engine, so we decided to head back to Guam and we dropped our bombs in the ocean there and so as we went on a little further, we started losing the oil in number three engine, and having quite a bit of backfiring so we felt the danger of losing another engine so we decided to go to Saipan which was about 45 minutes shorter flying time than going to Guam, between the two island about 45 minutes. So we went onto Saipan and landed there and actually there's another interesting about, and particularly for this state, is that on that last mission that we flew, our instruction was that if our radio operator received a code name, we were to return because they thought the war was going to end. We were to drop our bombs in the ocean and return to base. We did not receive that code name, "Utah" so all of the other planes continued on and dropped their bombs and then before they had returned to base, the war was over. The code name was "Utah" for that. If the radio operators received that name, we were to drop our bombs in the ocean and come back. I thought that was kind of interesting because it was "Utah." So anyway, we landed there on Saipan and of course when we heard the

war had ended, we went out and fired our 45's into the ocean to celebrate and of course we were happy it was over, and we felt like we were safe.

Rick: What knowledge did you or your crew have about the super bombs or atomic bombs?

Roy: We had none, and I'm sure there was none available for anybody. I don't think anyone knew about it except the crews who were actually flying the missions. And that was, of course, Colonel Tibbets and a fellow by the name of... his plane was called Bockscar I remember. His name was Bock I think. I'm sure those two crews who trained in Wendover, Utah by the way, for those missions, those atomic bomb missions, they were the only ones who knew other than of course higher-up people but it wasn't common knowledge at all.

Rick: So take us back to Saipan again and tell us in detail what it was like to hear that the Japanese had surrendered.

Roy: Well, I think that the only thing was that... mostly the people around us and our crew, we were all very happy and as I say, we fired our 45's in the ocean, but then we of course got another plane and we went back to Guam. Everybody was happy about it. There was no sorrow as far as the end of the war was concerned, but we did feel really sorrowful for those people in Japan that had suffered and had been damaged so much.

I might tell you about another mission that we flew. After the war, we flew what was called the "prisoner of war" mission. And this turned out to be quite a dangerous mission that we didn't really anticipate. We were flying taking supplies, medical supplies and food to drop to a mining town, it was a little mining camp up in north-west of Tokyo, maybe 80 miles, a little place called Ushio, so we had to fly up in this mountainous area and it just happened to be a cloudy day. There were broken clouds. One of the things we did do that day, and I have this written down at the time on some of the diaries that people kept, we flew through clouds where the mountains were higher than the clouds. That's something you don't want to do. Well, of course it was my job being the navigator to find this little mining camp call Ushio. When we were flying up this canyon, which was pretty much steep sides just like you would go up some of the canyons here, Provo canyon for instance, and we were going up that canyon and we could see about where this mining camp was. About the time we got to that camp, we did see it, but I looked up and I was sitting in the nose where the bombardier normally sat because I was trying to find it, and that was the best place to visually see. I turned around to the airplane commander and I said, "You better start pulling this thing up." We were in a box canyon and couldn't possibly turn around, and we were lower than the saddle in front of us. We were a ways away. Well, he didn't immediately want to respond but it only took him a second or two and he realized we were too low so he turned, and there were turbo super chargers I remember. We could normally not turn them up above eight. Well, they had what they called "war emergency power" and you could turn them up to ten. But they said you should only fly for two minutes or you might blow a cylinder, and of course that wouldn't be good to blow some cylinders. But anyway, he tried putting the flaps down a little bit and it didn't seem to work and thought maybe we could climb more with the flaps a little bit down so we pulled the flaps back up and of course turned all the power on that he could with the turbos and just kept the power going and we made that saddle by about 25 feet. I could look down and see it. You know, it would just be underneath you. We went so fast, of course we were traveling about 250-275 miles an hour but it didn't matter whatever it had been,

but we made it over that and came into this beautiful mountain valley. It was a mountain resort, Nikko, Japan where people go from Tokyo up there for the weekend, and even when the Olympics were on, a lot of people went from Japan, when the Olympics were up there we heard about it. So we were able to circle and turn around in this high mountain valley, beautiful valley and we could pass back over the same saddle that we just made it over a few minutes ago and as we came down from that saddle and towards the camp, we could see that all of these prisoners were out there waving at us and that was a wonderful sight to see. We were the first signs of freedom for them, and of course as we went by, we dropped the parachutes that we had with the supplies and we could see that they were there gathering them up. Apparently the Japanese of course knew the war was over and they were allowed to be out of their camp. So they were out there right in the bottom of the ravine there where we were. It was a wonderful sight to see. We proceeded on to Tokyo. Of course the war was over so we wanted to see what Tokyo looked like, so we spent quite a bit of time flying over Tokyo and taking a few pictures. Some of those pictures didn't turn out too good but it was a real experience to see how the places were burned and a lot of nothing. Even the cement buildings were burned out inside. Then when we left there we went on to Iwo. We thought we were going to land at Iwo Jima because we'd been up there quite a long while. We were getting a little low on gas. I was sitting up front and it was a beautiful day and there were a lot of low, broken clouds and I came to this island, I can't remember the name of it right this moment, but it was just a little small island rock and I knew right where we were. I gave the pilot a heading for Iwo Jima and I was very confident that this was a good heading, and so I was quite relaxed and enjoying the flight and I knew we had quite a big head wind so our ground speed was quite slow. Well the sad part is, on the way down... by the way we saw this little island down there and it looked like there were dye markers in the water so we thought that maybe somebody, you know we had things like that to help rescue if we went down. We thought maybe somebody was down around that little island and thought we'd go down and see and call for somebody to come help. As it turned out it was nothing but things under the water that were quite colorful. So we climbed back up a little bit and went on to Iwo. Well, my ETA was up and Iwo wasn't there and we didn't... I went a little while longer and thought, "We've got this slow air speed" but we couldn't find Iwo. We couldn't see Iwo, and that's a big ocean out there, and just by chance I looked up and I could see on the pilot's instruments in front of him they had these compasses that looked like they were floating in fluid and that was the ones that each of them had. But they also had a repeater of what I had in front of me. I had a gyro flex-gate compass in front of me, about an eight-inch one, something like that and it had repeaters up there that was easier for the pilots to see. So they flew by these two repeaters up there in front of them. Well I just happened to look up, and it was a good thing I did or I wouldn't be here, and see that the one that floats in the fluid, their heading was about 35 degrees different than my heading, and of course my heading on my compass is what they had been flying by so we'd been flying about 35 degrees off course and so that explained why we hadn't seen Iwo Jima. They couldn't get a radio bearing or anything and so I tried to compute, I did compute where I thought we were by dead reckoning from that last point where I knew we were and gave them a new heading for Iwo Jima, and then I proceeded to get up in that little tube where there was an astrodome there and take a shot on the sun to see if I could get at least one line of position to help tell where we were. Well we flew... it takes quite awhile to take a shot and then compute it. And that isn't a very good thing to do anyway. What I mean is, you can't tell a whole lot just one line of position. And you have to have time that's accurate. If your time is off four seconds you'd be off a mile. Of course that isn't much up there but if you're off quite a

bit, it would make a difference. But anyway, I was computing out that shot on the sun and they said, you know it was broken clouds so we couldn't see the island very easy, but anyway they called back and said, "We see the island" so I was relieved. I think that was one of the most traumatic experiences for me. And you might say, had nightmares after because it would have been so easy not to have looked up and see and I would have felt responsible for all of those lives—the eleven men on there, including myself that we probably would have been lost if we would have gone down out there in the ocean and not knowing where we were. And here the war was over, you know, so that was the most joyous thing I think I've ever experienced because I just felt so responsible for what would have happened, and it would have been so easy to make an error. We were flying right or left and once I gauged my gyro on the compass then I didn't have the reading anymore even, so if I would have made a mistake it would have been bad.

Rick: Every time you took off there was danger.

Roy: Yeah, there was. One mission, I don't remember the exact date right now, but we were coming back from that mission and we came upon a real terrible storm and they gave us instructions not to come back to Guam because it was so much worse there than where we were they said, so they told us to go to Tinian and land. Well, we gave them a heading for Tinian, and of course it was so stormy that we couldn't see anything and even lights. So we were nearing where I thought we were and it was Tinian and we called the tower and they did respond and we said, "We're coming in" and they said, "We can't see you, we can't see you." So we kept coming in. But when we got there, we saw these runway lights and there was red light, and you're not suppose to land against a red light so we went around again—made another turn around to come back and make another approach—and when we got there of course the red light was still there and it was such a stormy night that we couldn't see anything. We were afraid we were going to even lose the runway lights if we went out again and we thought we might be down pretty low on gas so we landed against the red light and of course that was the pilot's choice to do. I remember as we landed it was so hard to see that he asked Pavey, who was our bombardier and he sat in the nose and had been through a lot of landings, he said, "Pavey, tell me when to pull it back." So Pavey did and he pulled it back, and of course we landed o.k. but as we got about part-way down the runway we passed an airplane that had ground-looped right there and just happened to be enough that it was off of the runway off to the side, and if it hadn't been off the runway—we were going about 75 miles an hour at the time—we would have crashed into that airplane, and it happened to be friends of ours. His name was Captain Lawless, and his crew who we took back to Guam the next day because their plane was ruined. Just luckily they were off of the runway so that was another time that we were saved. So we felt very blessed that we made it through all of those incidences and others of course, so that was something that we did feel good about of course.

Rick: How old were you at the time?

Roy: I was twenty. In fact, our crew average age was twenty years old. We did have the engineer who was about three years older than the youngest. We had one that was nineteen and most were twenty or twenty-one. We averaged twenty years of age and so we were very young looking back at the time.

Rick: How old was the pilot?

Roy: The pilot was probably twenty-two. He was the next oldest man on our crew.

Rick: Describe what the pilots and the crew thought when you were asked to go low-level with your B-29?

Roy: General Curtis LaMay decided that we were not having good enough results by bombing at high altitude so they decided on low-level at about 7,000 feet instead of around 23 or 24,000 feet. Well, of course we were a little fearful of that. We thought maybe we would be sitting ducks going in at that altitude, but the good thing about it was they let us go in at night. We went in alone mostly because we were dropping incendiaries and going at night made it a little less likely we'd get hit with flak or with fighters in the daytime. Of course they did have night fighters and would try to attack us at night, but it was scary at first but it proved to be, I think, a good thing. It was a good decision because our bombing was much more effective because it was area bombing. It was fire bombing. You'd start fires and burn square miles of the city. I have a book that I bought called, "A Torch to the Enemy" and actually a historian wrote it about the March 9th raid on Tokyo that I previously talked about. He has compared cities here in the United States with cities in Japan that were bombed. For instance, they'd compare Tokyo with New York City and say, this was say 50% destroyed. They'd compare Salt Lake City with another city in Japan and say that was 48% destroyed. Some 75% destroyed. There must be 40-50 cities on that list comparing cities and it ranged from 98% down to 20% so there was a lot of damage done, and that's why I believe that—because I'd seen strike photos of course—the war would have been over even though we didn't dropped the atomic bomb before long. But I'm sure the atomic bomb did hasten the end of the war.

Rick: Describe the impact for the crew for those long flights and how much shorter was it after Iwo Jima in time.

Roy: Our missions were 12-18 hours round trip from Guam to Japan and back--some of the twelve, and some of them as long as eighteen and in between. That was the whole round-trip

Rick: And how far was Iwo Jima to Guam?

Roy: Iwo was just about half way. It was about 750 miles roughly and maybe 750 more to Guam.

Rick: And there were a lot of B-29's that landed there in an emergency.

Roy: Yeah, the marines saved a lot of us. They did.

Rick: Would we have won the war without a B-29?

Roy: That's a good question. As far as winning the war without a B-29—certainly the Navy had defeated the Japanese Navy without a doubt. They were completely beaten. After the battle of Midway, why they didn't have much left. They couldn't really contend with our fleet at that time so the war really was over after Midway but the Japanese wouldn't admit it. Of course they

didn't have a mechanism for surrender. They didn't want to surrender because it was not honorable and so they were just not willing to surrender, and even after the last mission that was flown—the one after the two atomic bombs—there were many efforts by the military to take over and even capture the emperor and continue the war because it just wasn't honorable to do such a thing as surrender. I think it would have ended because their cities were being devastated one after another. We were down to where we were bombing smaller cities, not even the major cities because the major cities had been pretty well destroyed and so it was getting to where you were having a hard time finding a target you would say. That may be a little exaggeration but I think the war would have ended, yes. But if it didn't, they were prepared—I read some secret documents - that were secret at the time—explaining how the Japanese were prepared to defend their island even down to the women and children so we would have lost a lot of... they still had a pretty good supply of kamikaze pilots and planes so we would have lost a lot of men. It has been estimated that it might have been as many as a million men if we had to invade. But I think they would have surrendered without the invasion if we had just kept up the bombing. So I feel that the B-29's did contribute a lot, of course, to the end of the war, and of course carrying the atomic bombs was something that did conclude it.

Rick: It took them six days to surrender after the second bomb was dropped.

Roy: Yes it did.

Rick: What are your thoughts about the Allied forces winning WWII and the importance of that victory?

Roy: The importance of the Allied forces winning WWII is hard to imagine, but certainly we had a megalomaniac over there in Germany, Hitler who probably had ambitions of ruling the world, I don't know. But he certainly wanted to control all of Europe and we don't know where he'd go from there and of course they were the Axis powers with Italy and Japan and Germany. Together, if we hadn't had won the war they probably could have controlled the war. We might be in serious trouble at this time. We might not be a country like we are with freedom that we have. So I think it was very, very important and of course England was just hanging on by a thread when we went over there to help them. Germany made so many mistakes in their... I should say Hitler. One thing is they could have gone in and captured England after... before they went on even into Russia. That was one of their big mistakes too. They didn't do England and they went on to Russia and of course they got into Russia and clear into Moscow and St. Petersburg and didn't get inside the city of St. Petersburg or Moscow but the winter weather and the Russians finally turned them back at Stalingrad and so forth and from then on it was all downhill for the Germans. Certainly they made a big mistake. Napoleon even did the same mistake. He went into Russia and made it to the outskirts of Moscow and then was forced back. But certainly Russia was a big factor in the war. They lost, I don't know, twenty thousand, twenty million men or something much more than any other country and so they were a big contributor in the defeat of Hitler.

Rick: And it really has changed the lives of all Americans by winning that war.

Roy: Oh it has. There's not doubt about that. Our lives have really changed and it has been good. I don't know what the results really would have been if we had lost, but I can imagine that it wouldn't be good.

Rick: When you're doing incendiary bombing, can you feel the heat?

Roy: No, we never could feel the heat. We were traveling from the incendiaries at several hundred miles an hour and up in a little bit of altitude and you're going fast. When we were doing... well the one in Nagoya, we couldn't feel the heat but we could certainly feel the updraft on some of the fires there and see the clouds that were way above us. I don't recall ever feeling like we felt the heat.

Rick: Could you see from the air people trying to get away from the fires?

Roy: No, I really couldn't see, I could imagine. We did another mission that flew that I might tell you about. We as a crew were assigned to go up to Japan before anybody else—before any of the other bombers came—and determine a wind, which was the navigator's responsibility. The reason we would determine this wind is because all of the planes that came later they used the wind to set in their bombsite to drop the bombs. They would come in at low altitude and then climb altitude right before they got to bombing the city and they didn't have time to compute a wind so we went up there over the sea of Japan and it was a beautiful moon-lit night. I remember looking down on those islands and it just looked so beautiful and the ships were kind of scurrying around and you could see their wakes there. In fact we even reported some of the naval ships that were there because we were there over the target for two hours and forty-five minutes and we would broadcast this wind to each plane that came along, and they would know that wind so they could set it into their bombsite. In addition, we would be going around the target area and dropping what they called a window chafe or rope, and all it was, was chopped up tin foil, and we would drop copious amounts of that so it would interfere with their radar guns. The guns would think that was an airplane and shoot at the chafe we were dropping, hopefully, and of course that was done so it would protect those other bombers that were coming in as well. After we were all through we'd watch all the bombing, and that's the one where we could look down in the streets and you'd see the flames and just imagine people down there trying to get away from these firestorms that were created. But after that mission... we carried no bombs on that particular mission we had so much of the chafe and the rope. But our pilot decided we needed to fly right over the target anyway. Not many of us were too pleased about that. He just figured we would, so he did. We were there right around close anyway, but I didn't think we had to fly right over the target.

Rick: Did you prefer a day over a night mission? Did you feel more comfortable on a night mission vs. a day mission?

Roy: I think night missions versus day missions were a little more comfortable and the fighter planes couldn't see you. They were night fighters but they didn't seem to be quite as effective as the day fighters and they had some pretty aggressive and good pilots that did attack us during the daytime. In fact, we had one experience where we had them pass right under our wings where we had Cordis, I believe his name was, was rammed by a fighter right between one and two

engines. Of course they went down. We had that one mission I was telling you about that had so many fighters up there that our crew got credit for shooting down three fighters in four minutes and for that, and along with all the things we'd been through, all of our crew received the Distinguished Flying Cross. We also received the air medal and one cluster as well before and after that.

Rick: I'm surprised that their airpower was even that strong. You still had fighters up there even on the very last mission huh?

Roy: Yeah.

Rick: Tell us about coming back to the United States after the war and what your feelings were.

Roy: When we came back to the States, we went by points. We had points that would credit us. In other words, what we had done and how long we'd been in and how many missions that we had flown and this kind of thing. All of our crew came back separately. We didn't come back as a crew. I was a navigator on another plane. I didn't know any of the fellows. Of course, we came back by way of Quadulan and Mather Field, California and so forth and took the train there back to Utah and I rode the inter-urban out of Salt Lake, the Orem as it was called and ended up in Springville and my folks were there to meet me... (end of tape)

Rick: Tell us about your experiences coming home Roy.

Roy: Well, as we came in, of course we came into the San Francisco bay area and back to Mather field and that was certainly emotional. We looked down and saw that and we were in the United States... we're home, you know. Then of course we stayed there a few days before we were able to get on a train. We rode a train to Salt Lake City. In Salt Lake City, I got on the Orem inner-urban and came down to Springville where my folks were there to meet me at the station there and of course that was a very emotional time to see and to be safe, and I had done one thing that I have regretted. The war ended, and I didn't write a letter right away and tell my folks I was safe. My mother walked the floor for several days before she found out I was safe, and I didn't even realize that was happening. I knew I was safe, but I felt so guilty that I didn't write home immediately and she had to suffer. My brother was in Europe. He was in the war over there and so they had two to worry about, of course the war in Europe had ended months before, so he was safe.

Rick: How did your mother first know that you were safe? Was she notified that you were coming home? Did you call from Salt Lake or California?

Roy: Well, of course she knew that I was safe when I wrote her a letter from Guam, but see it was months before we actually got... before the war ended before we got to come back. But I think I called her on the phone, or at least wrote her, and I can't remember exactly, but she did know that we were coming home, or I was coming home.

Rick: Well they were all there at the train station when you got off the train?

Roy: Just my folks... my mom and dad. They were happy to see me, so it was mutual.

Rick: Well Roy, thank you so much.