

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

Center for Pacific War Studies

Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview With

Charles J. Schlag
4/17/09
U.S.S. Intrepid CV-11
VF-10 Air Group 10
Pilot F4U

My name is Richard Misenhimer: Today is April 17, 2009. I am interviewing Mr. Charles J. Schlag by telephone. His phone number is area 610-644-2011. His address is 648 South Warren, Malvern, PA 19255. This interview is in support of the National Museum of Pacific War, Center for Pacific War Studies, for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Charlie I want to thank you for taking time to do this interview today and I want to thank you for your service to our country during World War II. Now the first thing I need to do is read to you this agreement with the Museum. When I do these in person, of course, I let the man read it and sign it. Since this is by phone, let me read this to you and make sure it's ok. Is that all right?

Mr. Schlag:

Sure

Mr. Misenhimer:

(Agreement read.) Is that OK with you?

Mr. Schlag:

Yes, it is.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What is your birth date?

Mr. Schlag:

8/25/22. It was a Friday and I was born at 3:15 in the afternoon.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where were you born?

Mr. Schlag:

Wheeling, West Virginia, in a hospital. I wasn't at home. Some people in those days were born at home. In 1929 my father went and paid cash for a Model A Ford, four-door sedan. I learned to drive it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Schlag:

Yes, I have two brothers and two sisters. I am the oldest.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were either of your brothers in World War II?

Mr. Schlag:

One brother was and other was Mongoloid, Downs Syndrome.

Mr. Misenhimer:

The one that was in the War, did he come home?

Mr. Schlag:

Yes, he fought in the Philippines. He come home.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Is he still living?

Mr. Schlag:

No, he died of lung cancer last year.

Mr. Misenhimer:

If he were living, I would see if I could interview him.

Mr. Schlag:

No, he died at age 84 with lung cancer. He smoked and I didn't.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, you say you had sisters?

Mr. Schlag:

Two sisters, yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were they involved in war work at all?

Mr. Schlag:

No. Both of them are younger and they were home during the War.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, you grew up during the Depression. How did that affect you and your family?

Mr. Schlag:

We are very conservative in how we manage our finances. And I think I passed it on to my children.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's good. What was your father's occupation?

Mr. Schlag:

Well, my father was a soldier in the First World War and in the home town of Wheeling, one of the best jobs they had back there was stogie roller, Marsh Stogies. So he was doing that when he went into the service. When he came out of the service he realized that was going to be a mechanized situation so he started looking for another job and while he was looking for another

job the Depression hit and he got a truck driver's job. So he was a truck driver for the rest of his life, from then on.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was he able to keep employed during the Depression?

Mr. Schlag:

He was making \$25 a week all the way through the Depression til the War started.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Back in those days that wasn't too bad, I guess.

Mr. Schlag:

No, that was, well I said in 1929 he went and bought a brand new 1929 Model A Ford. Paid cash.

Paid \$750.00.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you all have a garden or anything like that?

Mr. Schlag:

Yeah. We had chickens in the backyard and we always had a garden.

Mr. Misenhimer:

A lot of people were pretty much self-sufficient back in those days.

Mr. Schlag:

My father, his parents were farm people. So that was in the family. I have a garden. It's still there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go to high school?

Mr. Schlag:

At Wheeling Central High.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What year did you graduate?

Mr. Schlag:

1941.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what did you do when you graduated?

Mr. Schlag:

Well, when my father... I'll tell you this story, you asked me. When my father was married he built a house. He moved into, he built a duplex, and he went on the first floor and he rented the second floor out to a man who worked for the telephone company. My mother got pregnant with me and he said if you have a son, I'll give him a job with the telephone company. And that's where I went, right out of high school. With the telephone company. That was Depression days so one of the things in my hometown was that you either worked for the city, farming, a policeman or you worked for the utilities there, the electric company, the water company or the telephone company. Those were the people who always had jobs. I ended up with the telephone company.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What telephone company was that?

Mr. Schlag:

That was the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone, C&P, Chesapeake and Potomac. It was part of the Bell system and that included the state of Virginia, West Virginia, Washington, D.C. and I think Delaware.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was your job with them?

Mr. Schlag:

I started out cleaning telephone cords and ended up as splicer's helper when I went into the service.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, on December 7, 1941 Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. Do you recall where you were when you heard about that?

Mr. Schlag:

Yes, I do. I was reading the Reader's Digest after going to church. I was in my room reading the Reader's Digest and the radio was on and that's when I heard it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what was your reaction when you heard that?

Mr. Schlag:

I run down and told my parents. I didn't know where Pearl Harbor was but I told them what had happened.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And you were nine years old.

Mr. Schlag:

No, no, not in 1941

Mr. Misenhimer:

I mean 19, I'm sorry. I did my math wrong, 19.

Mr. Schlag:

OK, that's better.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Had you registered for the draft?

Mr. Schlag:

Yes, I did.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Before that, or when?

Mr. Schlag:

Well, when they sent a notice out that you had to go in and register. I registered when they told me to.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I mean was that before December 7, 1941?

Mr. Schlag:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I think the draft actually started in 1940.

Mr. Schlag:

I think it was before then. I don't know, I just remember registering. Back in the Depression days what they had was CCC and when that was over they signed them up for a year and a day if they wanted to stay in and get the \$21.00 a month. And before the year was up, we were at war.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's right. Then when did you go into the service?

Mr. Schlag:

I think I went in February 1943.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Which branch did you go into?

Mr. Schlag:

I went in as a Navy cadet.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And you volunteered?

Mr. Schlag:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And how did you choose the Navy?

Mr. Schlag:

Well, when I was a kid growing up I used to build airplanes and Columbus, Ohio, was 125 miles west of Wheeling and I was a paperboy and I read in the Sunday paper that they were having flights in an airplane in Columbus, Ohio, for 50 cents to see the golden dome of Columbus, so (my parents didn't know about this) I went and in those days the way you got around, you thumb ride. You know what that is?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh, yeah, you hitchhiked.

Mr. Schlag:

Yes, I thumbed my way to Columbus, Ohio with \$1.50 in my pocket. I got to Port Columbus and I went up in a tri-motored Ford, one pilot, and for 50 cents they took off and went around the capitol of Ohio at Columbus and came back and landed. For 50 cents and when we landed we went over what we called today General Aviation and there was a biplane down there and I built airplanes and I thought by gosh I'm going to go up and fly one of those biplanes. So I went over and I'm arguing with the woman and she wouldn't give me a ride for \$1, she said the ride was \$2. Some old guy on the couch there said hey, kid, come over, do you really have \$1? The old guy was 21 years old by the way. I said, yeah. He said, can I see it? I showed him the dollar and he says come on, I'll take you up in a J3 Cub. So he said you're hot to fly, how come? I said, well, I build airplanes and I want to fly one. I know what the controls do and so forth. So he took me up and around and he took off and he said, OK, you got it. So I flew around the pattern and he brought it back in and landed. Cost me a dollar. I didn't touch the ground for a couple months after that. I was walking on air.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Didn't need a plane to fly then, did you?

Mr. Schlag:

So a friend of mine, his brother joined the Navy cadet program. That's how I found out about it. Lo and behold he had bad eyes and got washed out, so I went into the Post Office and tried to join and they said you need college. Well, I didn't have college and they said come back when we lower the requirements. So they reduced the requirements down to two years of college. I went in again and they still wouldn't talk to me. Then they reduced it down to if you can pass the college exam. That's when I went in and passed the college exam and they shipped me to Washington, D.C. and they gave me the complete physical and interview and everything and sent

me back home. I went back home and waited and waited and waited. I think I waited four months before they called me but what happened was, They said do you want to go to Pensacola or do you want to go to pre-flight? I said I want to go to Pensacola because I'm patriotic, you know. Get out in combat as soon as possible. So they said we'll let you know. When I got the orders I went to, not Pensacola, not pre-flight but pre-pre-flight. Ended up in a college called Mt. St. Mary's at Emmetsburg, Maryland, flying J3 Cubs out of a cow pasture. They didn't have uniforms for us. What they gave us was the old CCC uniforms, so we had green trousers, a green mackinaw, a green hat and a green belt but we had to provide our own shoes, socks, underwear and shirts. We stayed there until we were called to pre-flight school. That was about four months.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now February 1943 is when you went on active duty then, right?

Mr. Schlag:

Yeah, that's correct.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Schlag:

When they called me there to go to Washington, D.C. from Wheeling, the B&O Railroad went through our hometown and they gave me a sleeper so I got an upper bunk all the way to Washington. Once I was in the Navy they sent me on a coach home; I sat up all the way back home. The other amusing thing was while I was down at the recruiting office in Washington, lunch time came around so they took all the cadets and whatever across the street to a cafeteria and going through the line and people were picking up what they wanted to eat and, of course, I

didn't have much money in those days so I just picked up what I could pay for and the Chief said what's wrong, aren't you hungry? I said, yeah, but I don't have enough money to pay for all this. He said Don't worry about it, the Navy's paying for it. Go back through the line. That's my first experience with the Navy.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what was your pay when you first went in?

Mr. Schlag:

The same as an Annapolis cadet. I don't remember what that was.

Mr. Misenhimer:

But it was probably like \$50 a month? Some such?

Mr. Schlag:

Whatever it was I sent it home to my mother, I know that but I don't remember what it was. I do know that whatever the cadets at Annapolis were getting that's what we were being paid.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what did you do in that college with your pre-pre-flight?

Mr. Schlag:

The pre-pre-flight? You mean at Mt. St. Mary's at Emmetsburg, Maryland?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yes.

Mr. Schlag:

Well, we had civilian pilots training us and they had civilian clothes and we would fly in the morning and then we would have class, navigation, physics, mathematics and Navy training to be an officer, all the rules and regulations. And the priest was in charge of us and the only officer

we saw would come out from Washington, D.C. and he was a lawyer in civilian life and he would come up and pay us. Weird.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you solo there?

Mr. Schlag:

Yes, I did. I flew the J3 Cub and soloed in seven hours.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What were they like to solo?

Mr. Schlag:

Well, what happened was, he took us up for a flight check before you got to solo and you had to make a three-turn precision spin and come out on a heading. We started at 3,000 feet and I did that OK but when I pulled out of the spin, the engine stopped so then the instructor said, "I got it" and he pushed over and tried to pick up speed and tried to get the prop to turn and it wouldn't. So he said what would you do? I said I'd take it back to base and land. He said, "Can you do that?" I said, "Sure." I thought I washed out already, you know. Cause the prop stopped. All the guys, there were seven, there were nine students, nine cadets in our group. Every time they came back, they wanted to know how you did and I said, "I think I washed out." Then he called them all together after he marked my logbook and said I did a real good job. So that was a crazy experience in J3 Cubs.

Once they gave us a plane to fly, we didn't change the plane. We had about four different...we had a J3, an Aeroronica, trying to think of some of the others. A Monocoop.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Probably a Taylorcraft

Mr. Schlag:

Yeah, but whatever plane you took your first flight in, that's one you were going to take your check ride in. I soloed in a J3 Cub in seven hours.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything else happen there at that college.?

Mr. Schlag:

The memorable things were the coach. They had a school coach who was in charge of our physical training and we used to run ten miles every fourth day we had to run ten miles. You were in pretty good shape, you know, when you went in.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you live in there?

Mr. Schlag:

In the school dorm. There were two cadets to a room in student housing, right on the college. We just didn't have anything special or different than the students had that lived on campus.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go from there?

Mr. Schlag:

From there we went to Athens, Georgia, for pre-flight.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What happened there?

Mr. Schlag:

At the university at Athens. That's when you got your first military uniform, you know, your trousers and shoes and everything you needed as a cadet, clothingwise. That's when you had

more navigation, more physics, aircraft and engine, and military, learn all the things you need to know in the military, who to salute, who not to salute and all that sort of thing. We did have—all our instructors were Marines by the way. Most of them were Sergeants. Tough as nails. Let me give you one experience. The Air Force had a recruiting office off campus. If you walked over, they would make you an immediate Lieutenant in the Air Force because everybody's trying to get hold of qualified people. Well the cadets were already qualified, you know, they passed the physical and everything. The Army was desperate for pilots. So one day every two weeks we would have a graduation of the class and they would move on to the next base which was E Base and we were all (this is in the middle of the summer) dressed in our khakis and look like a bunch of Marines, you know, all the sharp creases in your shirt, sharp creases in your trousers, and the Air Force came over with this Stearman, dropping leaflets. So the sergeant in charge hollered, "Air raid, down on your belly, OK, crawl in the dirt." We were sweating of course and we picked up all this dirt and after the plane went past he looked at his watch and he says, "Back here in fresh uniforms in ten minutes." Just like to kill the sonofagun. But it was real good training. Food was excellent and you could eat all you want.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you do any flying there?

Mr. Schlag:

No, no. That was strictly ground school. Ground school and physical conditioning. We had what they called an obstacle course. That you had to run every morning.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you do any weapons training?

Mr. Schlag:

Not at that base, no.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything else there at Athens that you recall?

Mr. Schlag:

Well, we went on a ten-mile hike and the leading officer forgot where the heck he was going and they had to go out and bring us back by truck. This is in Georgia. A couple of things they did. They had a farm and they took 335 of us out to the farm and everybody got a hoe. We cleaned the fields. Cut all the weeds down in the fields. I remember that. I guess they needed someone to do it and all the people they normally had were in the military so they took us out and we worked in the fields for one whole day.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything else from there?

Mr. Schlag:

No, not that I can think of. More things like, where we had Saturday afternoon off from noon to six o'clock and we all went to town and went into a restaurant to get something and had some food in the restaurant. This was something to do but the best food was on the base. When I think about it, it was sort of silly.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then where did you go?

Mr. Schlag:

Went from there to Pensacola. Oh, to E Base at Memphis, Tennessee. At a place called Millington. That was probably about 20 miles northeast of Memphis. This was where we flew Stearmans That's the first time we flew since Mt. St. Mary's, Emmetsburg, in the J3 Cubs.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was the transfer from the J3 to a Stearman?

Mr. Schlag:

I didn't notice a difference, just a bigger plane, that's all to me.

Mr. Misenhimer:

The Stearman is a bi-wing, right?

Mr. Schlag:

Yeah. At that point they called E Basic elimination. A was familiarization and B stage was where most people actually washed out.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tell me about your experiences there at Millington.

Mr. Schlag:

First thing, you had to learn how to taxi the Stearman because the brakes didn't work as well as they do on the little 150 I have. So they went and put a third wheel underneath, it made an extension of the third wheel underneath the engine so when you taxi you wouldn't hit a prop and if you didn't know how to taxi, you had taxi training in Stearmans. That was one of things that was unusual. And then you had to do acrobatics in the B stage. And if you wanted to, the Navy was pretty liberal about letting you fly whenever you wanted to, so I was having trouble with the acrobatics and they said any time you want a plane, take it up. So we would go up before breakfast, sunrise, take a Stearman up and do our snap rolls and slow rolls around the rising sun. So a guy by the name of Paul James LeBlanc from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and I went up together. He's in his plane and I'm in mine and, you know the buckle on the seatbelt on a Stearman, it sticks up a little bit and this is in the summer and we were in summer flight suits and

when he went to do a snap roll the cuff of his right hand unbuckled his safety strap and all of a sudden I looked out, there he is upside down, the airplane is upside down, he's hanging on to the stick. And we're about 3,000 feet in the air I guess. He had a parachute on but he wouldn't leave loose. I watched him and the plane, all by itself, came right around and righted itself up and I looked over again and there he is sitting on the back of the cockpit, still hanging on to the stick. So we came back, no problem at all. But that was one of things they let you do if you wanted to fly, you could fly all you wanted to in the Navy. At least that was my experience. Just ask for a plane. If you're not assigned, you get a plane. You go up and fly.

The other thing I remember there, I haven't seen one of these planes in a long, long time. It's called an SNC. Made by Curtiss and it looked almost like an SNJ. The Navy finally got rid of them because down where the empanage was, that's the tail, it was very, very small and when they go up to do acrobatics, they snapped the tail off. Well, the Marines on that base had SNJs and SNCs, Marine instructors. We had Navy instructors and Marine instructors. You never knew who you were going to get. They went up on a Saturday afternoon and were doing some dogfighting and the commanding officer was having a tea party or something and they all went in and were disciplined. They all thought if they were going to be disciplined, send them out to combat. That's what they wanted. So he said, "No, I'm going to restrict you to the base for the rest of the war." That's one of the unusual things.

When we left the base on December 7, 1943-44, I guess it was, 1944. No, 1943. You know what the temperature and dew point, when they come together, what you get? You get fog. The flight officer at Memphis, Tennessee, sent the morning training flight out and he evidently didn't check the temperature-dew point. I'm on the train going to Pensacola at the time and we heard about it. Fog came in and the guys are flying into the water tower, flying into each other,

crashing all over the place. We got word that the flight officer was court martialed for not, I don't know how many guys got killed but that was December 7 and we were on a train going to Pensacola at the time that happened.

Mr. Misenhimer:

In your training up to now, had anyone been killed there anywhere?

Mr. Schlag:

No, not that I can recall. None that I knew or even heard about when we were at the base. I know a guy by the name of Rhoder from Schuylhaven, Pennsylvania, my roommate, he had a Marine instructor and when we used to do what they called S-turns to a circle. When they were finished, his instructor said OK, I got it and the instructor started flat-hatting. That means, you know, about 10-15 feet off the ground. Flying around the farms and he went around the barn OK, went around a couple more houses and everything and went around one barn and there was two trees there. They went right between the two trees and it took the wings off the airplane, dumped the airplane upside down. Rhoder fell out first and he's sitting under the tree and he realized his instructor's still strapped in and he goes over and unstraps him and he comes out and just about the time he got the instructor away, the plane fired. Caught on fire. So they walked back to the base carrying their parachutes and the next day the plane came in. The wings were perfect. The fuselage was all burned up.

One of the other things. Some of the guys would flat-hat and there were turkey farms around the base and they used to buzz the farms and the turkeys would go into the fence and kill themselves. I don't what happened to the students but I know the Navy was billed for the dead turkeys. That was some of the crazy things that I can recall.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Schlag:

Well, we left Memphis for Pensacola and we took a train down. Sit up all night on the train until we hit Pensacola. I ended up at Saufley(?) Air Base. Saufley Field. They had two fields, Saufley and Ellison were both the same.

There was another thing about back at Memphis. When I finished my training, the scheduled training, they didn't have any openings at Pensacola so they told us to stay there for another month. So, since you could fly anything you wanted to, they got a new airplane called the Tiny Tim. It was made of plywood but the radial, engine and flaps. So it was brand-new. I said I'd like to fly it. So they gave me a handbook and told me to go read the handbook and when you're ready, fly. So I went out and checked and the instructor said, "Oh, I'd like to go up with you". I said sure, so the instructor went up and we flew to an outlying field and he said Land, and I did. He offered me a smoke and I didn't smoke and he said How do you like the plane? Bla, bla, bla. You know and he said, "Tell you what, let me go in the front seat and fly it, I've never flown one of these before." And I'm a cadet. But that was the Tiny Tim and that was the only place I ever saw one, was at Memphis. But we went from there to Pensacola and at Pensacola we flew Vultec Vibrators. That airplane was the first one I flew with a radial. It also had flaps but the wheels didn't retract. And we used that there for navigation, training and night flying. We flew night flying at Memphis also with the Stearmans. Got used to that. What they would do at Memphis. You would take off in the daylight and as it got dark you got accustomed to seeing different things at night and knew what they were. So now you're down at Pensacola they took you...a flight would go up and they'd give you an assigned altitude, like one guy would be at 8,000, another would be at 7,500 and so forth. You'd go up and just circle, circle the base at

night and when a recall, they would take the first guy down at a thousand feet, bring him in to land, and everybody else would move down. The base would tell you when to change your altitude. And we were flying down there with British cadets. That was my first introduction to the British cadets that were over being trained by Americans. That was basically navigation and night flying.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's the one they called the vibrator?

Mr. Schlag:

Yep. It was a two place. One of the things they told us in our introduction was, we had an ensign talking to us and he said, "What you want to do, you go up to 3,000 feet and keep yourself in a landing configuration and pull throttle once and see what happens." Well, you get what they call a torque stall. You go inverted. Two weeks later that same ensign went out and killed himself. Doing the same thing he told us not to do. We were there for three months. You weren't there for three months. I think you were there for a month and then you went from Saufley and Ellison to Whiting Field. Now Whiting Field was where you transitioned into single engine or multi-engine, but I went into single engine and that's when you had instrument training. All instruments. That was at Whiting Field. Everybody that went to Whiting Field went to instrument training. They had twin engine Beechcraft, and we had single engine SNJs. That was your first Link trainer training also. You know what they are?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yes, right.

Mr. Schlag:

So almost everything we had there... Oh, I used to get on instrument training, they put you under the hood. I used to get sick so they grounded me and I talked to the flight surgeon and what they said was, "Well, if you can't overcome the sickness you're going to be washed out." And I said, What do you recommend? He said, Blow. Do you like flying? I said, Yeah. He said, Go up and do all the acrobatics you can do. Get it out of your system. So his prescription to the flight officer was to give me a plane any time I wanted it. So, whenever I had liberty I'd take a plane up, an SNJ and do acrobatics. And I got over the airsickness.

Mr. Misenhimer:

But you only had it under the hood, right?

Mr. Schlag:

Yep, under the hood. And my final check I had a Marine pilot, Marine major was my check pilot. What he did was, he put that plane up and got it so that the altitude wasn't changing and the airspeed was zero and we weren't going anywhere and he handed it to me. But I survived it but he spent a long time getting it just perfect. Everything looked good but it wasn't going anywhere.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Hanging on the prop, huh?

Mr. Schlag:

Yeah, and if you left Whiting Field you went to what we called the final squadron. They had two fields there, Bronson and Bloody Barron. Those are the two fighter bases and then if you were going multi-engine you went to Mainside and you would go into a PBY. That was when you left Whiting and were training in multi-engine you go to Mainside, Pensacola and that's where they flew the PBYs. At Bronson you got navigation, formation flying, gunnery, bombing, what the heck else? And dogfighting. It was pretty strenuous; everything was pressure. That's the first

time you got a machine gun, 30 calibers on an SNJ. Safety your guns when you come in to land and one guy came in and didn't safety his guns and the next one out started the engine to check it out, and the guns were hot and he didn't know it and he pressed the trigger and sprayed the barracks with 30 caliber machine gun bullets. No one got hurt. It all went through the second story windows.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What else?

Mr. Schlag:

Well, for what it's worth...my oldest son's name is Rene and when I was at Saufley Field, there were four cadets to a room. Normally supposed to be two but they were jamming us in so it was four and one of the guy's name was Rene Lash from Windsor, Maryland. He went on a navigation hop in a Vultec Vibrator and every fifteen minutes you're supposed to switch tanks from the left to the right, and the right to the left, so that your plane flies level. He ran out of gas in one of the tanks, and forgot about switching and of course, the engine stopped and he tried to make an emergency landing and if you overshoot you weren't supposed to turn around and go back. Of course, he overshot and tried to get back, crashed and his plotting board cut his head off. He and I were pretty good friends so I'm what, a 19-year-old kid. If I'm ever married and lucky enough to have a son, I'm going to name him Rene. So that's how my oldest boy got his name. That was at Saufley. I think he was probably the first one I knew that got killed, too, in training.

Mr. Misenhimer:

OK, then what happened?

Mr. Schlag:

Well, when you finished your training there at Bronson they scheduled you to go to Mainside to be commissioned. You usually went there two weeks ahead of time. When we arrived the scuttlebutt was that if you couldn't pass...well, you had to take eight words a minute. So everybody took eight words a minute in code. And the scuttlebutt was they were going to give you a surprise exam and for 12 words a minute and anybody that can't pass 12 was going to be washed out. So I went over to the radio shack and said, Look, how about teaching me how to take 12 words a minute? They said no trouble at all. I said will it go on my record? They said yeah. I said will it be acceptable? They said yes. So I kept going over until I got 12 words a minute and put it on my record. Lo and behold, before we were commissioned, the word came through that anybody that can't pass 12 words a minute was going to be washed out. These guys, myself included, we all had our uniforms. With the stripe on the arm, already ordered. But they washed them out.

Now I'm going fast-forward about ten years ago. I was talking to an Admiral and I found out that the mortality rate of the fighter pilots in the Pacific was 66 percent. So when that we came in and they learned how to combat Japanese planes the mortality rate started to drop considerably so now they're washing cadets out because they don't need them. Remember before they were hiding them wherever they could in pre-flight school.

Going back to Memphis, I had an instructor by the name of Sheriff. He was an ensign and he took me up in some test flights in B and he said, "Well, I don't think you did such a good job. We'll schedule you for another test tomorrow." So I went up with him the next day and we came down and he said, well, you're borderline. If you want to go to Great Lakes, wash out, I'll give you a down. If you want to keep on going I'll give you an up. I said, I want to keep on going so he gave me an up. I forgot about that back in Memphis. I'll bring his name up later on.

Then we were commissioned and that's an unusual thing. The commanding officer was Lester T. Hunt was his name, the commandant of the base, he gave us our wings and he ended up being a neighbor of mine where I live now. It's kind of crazy but that's what happened. I went over and visited him when he was there. He was a real nice guy. When he was in the Navy he flew at Norfolk and got married and his wife was on shore some place down there so the guys were scheduled to fly in their amphibian planes and he would go out and land, have lunch with his wife and come back. He always came back with more gas than the rest of the people. I understand he ended up being the pilot that Roosevelt had because he seemed to be the one who knew how to fly most economically.

He was the one who gave me the wings at Pensacola. Then we went from there over to, at least we did, I was assigned to be a dive-bomber pilot and went to Cecil Field, Jacksonville.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What happened there?

Mr. Schlag:

Well, when I reported to the base all operations were closed because nine guys had dove into the target, with SBDs. So there was a Congressional investigation and they were trying to find out what caused it. It was in summer again. So they went and gave everybody a physical. They thought it was lack of blood pressure. When you pull the stick back to pull out, you grayed out, you know, or blacked out. They figured that somehow the blood pressure had something to do with it. So in our group, there was six of us in the group, six cadets in each training group, six officers in each training group, I'm sorry, we're commissioned now. Three Marines and three Navy men in each group. Lo and behold I couldn't pass, my blood pressure wouldn't come up. So what they did was, they said I'm a guinea pig. They put two guys to make sure I didn't sleep,

see if that would bring it up. That didn't do it. I could exercise, swim, run, do whatever I wanted. That didn't do it. I could eat all the steak I wanted. That didn't do it. So finally I had an interview with the flight surgeon and he said, What do you do when you go on liberty? I said I go to the movies, go to a dance, and I forget what all, go to the seashore. He said, Do you ever go drinking? I said I don't drink. He said, Tell you what, unless you get yourself drunk, you're not going to fly. So by the way, when I'm grounded, the entire group, all six of us, are grounded, right. So we went to the Roosevelt Hotel in Jacksonville, we're in our whites as I recall, and they ordered beer. We rented a room and ordered all the beer. I can remember being on all fours counting twelve empty beer bottles. Quarts, I guess they were. And the guys said, "Do you think he's drunk enough yet?" They said yes, so they put me in a shower, dried me off, dressed me and away we went back to the base. The guy at the gate wouldn't let us in because he said I was drunk. They said no, he's sick. So they called the flight surgeon and he sent a gurney out. They put me on the gurney, back to sick bay, gave me blood pressure check, said OK, he can fly.

We went from there... Oh, at this base we had navigation, we had gunnery and dive bombing practice and formation flying. We went off the coast of Florida.. We had radar on our SBDs by the way. And we would go out there just past the 25-mile limit looking for subs. We never found any, of course. And we had aerial gunnery with tow sleeves. That's the first time we had tow sleeves to shoot at. So our training consisted of every day, one flight consisted of nothing but field carrier landing practice, flying the plane low and slow just above stalling speed and landing on Fleming Island. They had a cable across it so you came in and catch the cable, just the same as you would on the carrier. So basically, I guess it was mostly in the morning, we would have field carrier landing practice, at least our group did. In the afternoon you'd have gunnery, navigation or something else but every day you had field carrier landing practice, like

clockwork. And when you were finished with all that, they sent you to Great Lakes Naval, Glenview, Illinois, and at that point they had two Navy converted lake steamers to carriers, called the Wolverine and the Sable. They were flight decks. You couldn't stay overnight but you left the Glenview Naval Air Station and flew out and landed on that. So you had to make eight landings on either the Wolverine or the Sable, whichever one you were assigned to. One day I flew an SBD out which were equipped with tailhooks and the next day I flew an SNJ and the SNJ had a tailhook but didn't have the mechanism for operating it. So what they did, they tied it up with a clothesline, hand you a clothesline you wrapped around a hook in the cockpit and went around the pattern and one of the things you had to do was unwind it and throw the clothesline out and then that permitted your tailhook to drop down and you came in and land on the carrier. You didn't stay overnight because the carrier would only handle one plane at a time and you'd bring the plane back to the air station. But as soon as you got eight qualified landings then you went to what we called CASU unit for dive bombers and the CASU unit we went to was at Cape May, New Jersey. What they called the Wildwood Naval Air Station at Cape May. That field now is called Cape May County Airport. All dive bomber pilots that I know about went there and we lived in a place called the Admiral Hotel which during the First World War was a hospital and now they had Shore Patrol with dogs, those guys lived in there and all the people from the air station lived in the hotel. The hotel has since been torn down, by the way.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Schlag:

Well, while I was there...Oh, every time you changed a station you had to fill out papers and said what would you like to be? Well, when I graduated (end of side 1, tape 1)

Mr. Misenhimer:

You filled out the papers and said you wanted to go to fighter, then what happened?

Mr. Schlag:

Every time when you go into a new base you sign new papers so every time they said what would you like to do, I said fighter pilot. We were sitting down at Cape May and out of, oh, that was, we were flying SB2Cs and I never got a chance to fly one because I was selected to go to Atlantic City Naval Air Station to join Air Group 10 as a fighter pilot. The last thing I flew was an SBD and then the next plane I flew was a Corsair at Atlantic City.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You said something about you didn't date the right girl. What was that?

Mr. Schlag:

At Pensacola the girl would assign you to whatever you wanted, you know. You walk in and say, hey I want dive bombers, she'd give you dive bombers or torpedo or whatever. She had the power to give you whatever training you wanted. I told her I wanted fighter pilot but I didn't take her out to dinner or anything or treat her right, you know. I got whatever she felt like giving me and all the guys knew about it, so I got dive bomber.

Mr. Misenhimer:

But now you get the Corsair?

Mr. Schlag:

Yep, I ended up with the Corsair in Atlantic City.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And how was it, the transition to the Corsair?

Mr. Schlag:

Well, funny you should ask. All the training in SBDs, up to this time, always had an instructor with you, you know, in the back seat or the front seat or wherever and so I go up there and I'm not familiar with the Corsair at all. So I said to the commanding officer, Who's going to take me up in the Corsair and teach me how to fly this thing? He said, You got Navy wings on? I said, Yeah. He said, Navy pilots can fly anything the Navy has. Well, there's only one seat in the Corsair. When you're ready, let me know. So I checked out a handbook and I said, Can I take it back to my room? He said, Yes, check in every morning at eight o'clock and check out every night at five o'clock as long as you stay in your room, take the book and let me know when you're ready. So I came in one day and said, OK, I'm ready. So I go out, fire up the Corsair and take off. I'm flying for maybe five, maybe fifteen minutes, I guess, get familiar with it. I think, Gee, I'll go up and do a loop. You know, it's an airplane. I go up and push over and I pull up to do a loop and all of a sudden it stalls out. What the heck's wrong with it? It's supposed to be a first-class fighter. But when you want to retract the wheels, you have to undo your shoulder harness, lean forward, pull the pin out, lift it up and lock it. Well, I pulled it out, lifted it up but I didn't lock it. So when I pulled back on the stick to do the loop, my wheels came down. Now I'm dying in the air and I just don't have the cleanness to do a loop. I didn't know that so I tried it again. The second time another Corsair came up alongside me and gave me wheels up signal. So I picked the wheels up, go up again, 10,000 feet, and push over and do a loop and when you flew up to this time always flew with the cockpit open. Any picture you see of an SBD, no matter where, you'll find the pilot's cockpit is always open. Well, I had the Corsair. I had left the cockpit open. So I push over into a loop. At the top as you know when you do a loop, when the horizon disappears in front of you, you push your head back to wait until the horizon comes up on the other side. Well, I put my head back and poof, I lost my goggles. So my goggles are over

in Brigantine, some place in New Jersey, and then I came down and am telling the guys about my experiences and they said it's a fighter plane, you fly with the cockpit closed. That was my first flight.

What we did there with that was, we had gunnery practice with tow sleeves, we dropped smoke lights on the water and do strafing and we had a black point target down near, I'm trying to think of the name of the town, toward Millville some place in New Jersey was a target on the ground that you came in and dropped bombs on. Practice bombs, of course. They weighed about eight pounds. They were about a foot long. They had a powder charge in them so when they hit they gave a puff of white smoke so you know where you hit. Formation flying and gunnery and navigation was the principal things there. Mostly formation flying and bombing and aerial gunnery with the tow sleeves. That's what we did at Atlantic City when I joined the squadron.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now I understand on the Corsair there's an awful lot of torque on takeoff.

Mr. Schlag:

Got to ride with the right foot, keep it straight down the runway, that's all. I'm older now and I look back and I hate to say this, sounds like I'm bragging, I guess, but I guess I had a natural ability to fly. That's the only thing I can think of because I never had any trouble with the Corsair. I can remember aboard the carrier I took a wave-off once and I think I only took one wave-off and it wasn't my.. I didn't generate it. A fouled deck caused it. I can remember with 40 degrees flaps, an empty gas tank, no ammunition, cowls and coolers open, canopy open and the tailhook down and they gave me a wave-off. That's about two miles an hour above stalling. When you put full throttle on you're going to get the same torque reaction that you got when you had the Vultec Vibrator. It will turn, just twist in the air and I can remember making a left turn

wave-off to the left, with full right rudder. I had that on there so hard that my knee was shaking. I can remember that but in other words you're never supposed to cross controls but that's the only way that thing would fly. A lot of guys would spin in on the wave-off because they didn't give enough right rudder.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What else happened?

Mr. Schlag:

We left Atlantic City and we went up to Groton, Connecticut. There's an airport at Groton right below the sub base. In fact when you took off you went right over the, what the heck was it, we went over the Coast Guard Academy at Groton. The Coast Guard Academy is at Groton and the sub base is at Groton also. The field we went into was a pasture and I understand that the Seabees went in and made a field out of it but the control tower was the silo and we lived in tarpaper shacks with no fence around there. They just had the Marines walk around with dogs to protect from anybody coming in from the land side and also coming in from the sea side because that's when the Germans, if you remember, were dropping people off from the submarines. While we were at Atlantic City Naval Air Station, we had field landing practice again. Groton, Connecticut was field landing practice. Everywhere you went you had field carrier landing practice. You never let up on that and we went to Groton, Connecticut and up there we continued the same kind of training and I helped deliver Corsairs to Canada. I don't know if anyone knows about this but the Corsair had the very tip of the wing on the Corsair, F4U1D was fabric, not metal, because they took the extended fabric off, then the British could put it in the hangar deck of their carriers but they couldn't fold the wings and put the planes in the hangar deck the way we had them with the wingtip we had. They were making them and we flew them

up to Brunswick, Maine, landed and the Canadians would come over the pick them up. They were Corsairs that were given, lend-lease or whatever they did to the Canadians. That was one of the things at Groton. The other thing we were up at I think Fairhaven was the name of the field that we used for field carrier landing practice. Morning, noon and night. Morning and noon, I'm sorry, not night. So when you're up there one of the things you had to do was qualify for night carrier landings. So they took us up to Quonset Point, Rhode Island, took us out on the boat, 750 miles to sea and board a carrier. The planes were already on the carrier. We didn't fly out. We went out on some sort of a craft and then at nighttime you had to take off and make eight qualified landings at night aboard the carrier. Once you did that, now you're qualified to go to sea to combat. Since then I've heard that no Navy pilot would be sent to combat unless he had night carrier landing and 300 hours of flight time. We lost a man, a guy by the name of Larry Meade, coming in for landing. His plane got too slow and he spun off the fantail at night. That's the experience I don't want to go through again. That's a little scary. When you cut the throttle, you just hoped there was a carrier underneath you. Everything was black.

Mr. Misenhimer:

No lights, huh?

Mr. Schlag:

They had what we called pencil lights. On the rear of the carrier were two green lights, one on either side, and the front of the carrier had two pencil lights, red, one on either side. So you knew what end of the carrier you were aiming for. And they had a dish on the top of the carrier with a light in it so at night when you flew over this light you already knew which way they carrier was going and you flew over the light, say the carrier was going 180 degrees, when you flew over the light you picked up a heading of 180 degrees and from then on it was time to turn and come

around to land. That's how you determined which was the carrier was going. But everybody would make seven landings and then you'd go up and orbit until the last guy made his seventh landing and then the last landing you came in and stayed aboard. That was 44-45 New Year's Night in a snowstorm. That's when we checked out.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Ye gods. Then what?

Mr. Schlag:

Then we went back to Groton, Connecticut and what they did there they said OK, you're scheduled to go to Alameda Naval Air Station but they gave us an airplane and let us go home. So three of the guys I flew with, Bill Pierce, Tuck Heath and myself, we took our planes and went home and Tuck Heath's mother lived in Charlottesville, Virginia so we down there and stayed overnight and he visited his mother, then we flew to Cincinnati, Ohio, Bill Pierce's home and we stayed there overnight and my home in Wheeling, West Virginia, didn't have an airfield so when I hit Columbus, Ohio, I called my mother and told her I was coming over so I buzzed my home in Wheeling and landed at Atlantic City, I think and I called her and she thought I was at Pittsburgh again. She had no concept of time and distance and space. When we got back we were assigned a group, at least two pilots, to go to Alameda. So we took off from Groton, Connecticut, landed at Charlottesville. I couldn't get my wheels down, I had to blow them down. So when I got back aboard, they did what they had to do to solve the problem and I took off. Then they couldn't get them up and I had to go back down. They forgot to replace the seal but when I landed, I had a guy with me, a guy by the name of Farmer, so the two of us stayed together and we left there and we went down to the next stop was Atlanta, Georgia. At Atlanta, Georgia, the weather was bad so we had to stay there for a couple of days and coming back from

the mess hall one night I met a guy by the name of Sheriff who was an ensign at Memphis, Tennessee, gave me a flight and now he's a JG and I'm an ensign and I remembered him and he remembers me and he said, What the heck are you doing? I said, "We're going out to war, we're going out to Alameda, California. What are you doing here?" He said, "They sent me up here as an instrument instructor. You lucky guy." Remember I told you Sheriff was the guy who gave me an option to either take an up or a down at Memphis. That's the last time I saw him. We flew to Jackson, Mississippi to Dallas, Texas, Dallas, Texas to Yuma, Arizona, Yuma, Arizona to Bakersfield and Bakersfield to Alameda. Those were the stops we made on the way West. We took our own Corsairs with us and on the way out, one of the pilots, I don't remember his name right off, took a detour to buzz his home and spun in and died in his mother's arms. Never made combat. At Alameda, we didn't go to Alameda, we went to Livermore and Livermore was an airfield in the wine country then. I think it's all houses now. We did nothing there but field carrier landing practice. Every minute of the time. No other training at all. Just morning, noon and night, field carrier landing practice. Then we flew our planes over to Alameda and they put them aboard with cranes. We left Alameda and it took us a week to get to Honolulu.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What ship did they put them on at Alameda?

Mr. Schlag:

U.S.S. Intrepid, C.V. 11. That's one that's in New York harbor now.

Mr. Misenhimer:

C.V. 11, OK.

Mr. Schlag:

It was kamikazed. They brought it back to the States to repair and we went aboard it after it was repaired.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What unit were you in there?

Mr. Schlag:

VF 10

Mr. Misenhimer:

VF 10?

Mr. Schlag:

It was always VF 10.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Even in training?

Mr. Schlag:

When I went to Atlantic City, that's where I joined VF 10. From then on it was VF 10. While we were at Livermore, California, they took half the squadron and took them to Enyokern, California, down near San Diego to learn how to fly Tiny Tims. So our group then become VF 10 and VBF 10, Fighter Bomber 10 and Fighter 10. But as far as flying the airplanes, no difference but we had two different skippers. We had a skipper of VF 10 and a skipper of VBF 10.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was that trip over to Honolulu?

Mr. Schlag:

Well, that's the first Navy ship I was ever aboard except for making the night carrier landings, so I spent my time going from stem to stern, the keel to the bridge. Every day I was going some place different. I learned once through the ship from top to bottom and that's because I figure that's my home for a while so I better know what it's all about. So by the time I finished the tour of the ship, we made Honolulu. Made Pearl Harbor, I should say.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What date did you get on the Intrepid?

Mr. Schlag:

It was in February of 1945.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you got to Pearl Harbor, what happened there?

Mr. Schlag:

Well, we, trying to think now. We took off... Somehow, I don't recall whether we flew over to Barber's Point or they took the planes... Somehow we were over Barber's Point and no, we didn't have airplanes. We stayed at Barber's Point without airplanes and what happened was, they took our ship with the airplanes on it and took another air group out and checked them out. So we were at Barber's Point for maybe three or four weeks and then we went back aboard and went out to combat. Sort of like liberty if you want to call it that. I toured the whole island out there in that period of time but there was no flying while we were in Hawaii at all.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you go to other islands besides Oahu?

Mr. Schlag:

No. Just Oahu.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was liberty like in Honolulu?

Mr. Schlag:

Well, we knew the Royal Hawaiian and the Muana were scheduled to be R & R for the submariners. We knew that and those were the only two hotels at that time. Mostly what I did was sightseeing. Blowholes, Diamond Head and we went swimming at Waikiki Beach. I'm trying to think of some of the other things we did. I bought stuff for the wife-to-be. I didn't know it at the time but I bought all kinds of gifts for her.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was there still much damage in Pearl Harbor?

Mr. Schlag:

It was sort of like cordoned off. All the repairs were done. Any ships that were going to be repaired, they were done and gone.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I think, of course, the Arizona was still there and I think the Oklahoma was still there.

Mr. Schlag:

Yeah, whatever was sunk stayed there. They didn't have the memorial then, of course, but we could see them.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then you left on the Intrepid to go to combat, right?

Mr. Schlag:

That's right and we ended up, I don't know how long it took us but we ended up at Ulithi. That was my first realization that we were at war because when we pulled into Ulithi the carrier,

Randolph... The night before they saw movies on the fantail and the Japanese planes, kamikaze, I guess you call them, came in and killed like twenty some sailors watching the movie. They aimed for the screen, you know, and when we pulled in, the repair ship was there repairing the Randolph.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So then what happened?

Mr. Schlag:

So then we left there and started hitting the islands and it's all mixed from there on up until Okinawa and the battleship Yamato. We did all sorts of things. We were down in the Philippines for a while in that area. We had what we called time bombs. When the kamikaze were coming out they decided they were going to hit any Japanese field in the area with time bombs. You drop a bomb with a timer in it so that the Japs never knew when that bomb was going to go off. They couldn't use the airfield during that time. We did a lot of that and they would direct us out when the Jap planes were in the area. I guess you know I got five. I only got credit for four but I got five. They were probably, I don't know what they were but they were Jap planes and we just knocked them out of the air.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever actually have a dogfight with a Japanese plane?

Mr. Schlag:

The very first one tried to dogfight me and we were clued that they could turn inside us so if you couldn't get a good shot at him, don't let him get on your tail. The first one tried to loop and get on my tail. That's the one I got. Number one and I didn't get credit for him because I couldn't

prove that he crashed. I fired him and everything but for whatever reason they didn't see fit to give me credit for him. But the next four I got credit for.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What kind of planes were the next four?

Mr. Schlag:

I don't really know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were the fighters or bombers?

Mr. Schlag:

I think one or two of them were dive bombers. Vals or kates as I recall. I think the first one was a Zero because he was really maneuverable. I had a little bit of trouble getting it. My first rounds missed his tail because, our guns had tracers every fifth bullet was a tracer, so you could see where they were going. When I put the bullseye right on the sucker but the bullets were going past his tail. So what I did, I lift the nose up where I couldn't see him and give him a shot and dropped the nose and boy, I put them right in the engine. That's when I saw him get fired. But I didn't see him crash. When I pulled the trigger it took a picture where the bullets were supposed to go and all was just blank air. I guess that's the reason they didn't give me credit for it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How many machine guns did the Corsair have?

Mr. Schlag:

Six, three on either side.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have to fire them all at once or could you fire different ones?

Mr. Schlag:

You could but when I went out, our squadron was made up of fifty percent VF17 pilots that had been in combat and all of them were aces. Fifty percent of our fighter squadron pilots had been in combat before so what you did was, you could arm any one of those three guns, two outboards, two middles and two inboards. So what you do, you arm the two outboard guns. OK. Then when they were empty, then you used the center guns and when they were empty you used the inboard guns. That way the Japs used to think you were out of ammunition. You carried 400 rounds of 50 caliber ammunition.

Mr. Misenhimer:

For each gun?

Mr. Schlag:

Yeah, 400 for each gun for 2600 rounds. Uh, 2400 rounds. The ammunition as I recall was a solid projectile, an incendiary, an armor piercing, a tracer and I don't know what the other one was but I know they had five different colors: purple, red, green, orange and blue. It all meant something so when they loaded your belt they knew what order to put them in.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You usually fired just two guns at a time then?

Mr. Schlag:

That was what we started doing in order to be able to not be in combat and have empty guns. Every once in a while someone would get in combat and arm all six guns. In fact, Norwal Creel, I think he got seven, he ran out of ammunition and pulled up alongside a guy and emptied his 38 into him. Never hit him as far as we know, but he was frustrated: he had no more ammunition.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How long did it take to shoot 400 rounds?

Mr. Schlag:

Maybe two minutes, three minutes. Didn't take very long to get rid of them. Because when you give them a burst you pull the trigger, say one, two, boom, that was it, you know. Sent quite a few rounds out at the same time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Two or three seconds, right. Eight or nine rounds a second, right.

Mr. Schlag:

You're bringing up all kinds of memories with me talking.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Good, that's my purpose.

Mr. Schlag:

One of the guys in the squadron went and chewed the tail off a Jap, too. He ran out of ammunition and chewed up his tail.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did it ruin his propeller?

Mr. Schlag:

What?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Could he get back with his propeller?

Mr. Schlag:

Oh, yeah. I think they had to change it. He damaged it pretty bad.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Probably didn't help the engine either. What's some other things that happened?

Mr. Schlag:

Well, you know, being an ensign I was boot end. Tail-end Charlie. I can remember coming back from one hop and they asked, Report state. That meant tell them how much gasoline you got. I said Zero. They said, Repeat. I said, Zero. They said, Immediate landing. I went around and came in to land and when the flags gave me the cut the engine, I pulled the throttle back to cut the engine and the engine stopped. It stopped before it landed and it had already hit the deck so I was very fortunate. That was an unusual one. The other one I told you about was the wave-off. Where I reversed my controls in order to make a left turn with full right rudder.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I understand that the Corsair with that big nose you had to look out the side to go down to taxi or whatever.

Mr. Schlag:

Yep, that's right. If you're on a takeoff roll, you have to almost fishtail because you can't see over the engine. So the rule is, when you take off push the stick forward so that you can look over the engine when you're rolling. When you get airspeed then you pull the stick back and take off.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You all did not catapult off, did you?

Mr. Schlag:

Almost every one of my takeoffs was a catapult because I was out forward. Anyone forward of the bridge had to be catapulted, anyone after the bridge could fly off.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was it like to be catapulted off?

Mr. Schlag:

It wasn't bad at all. What happened was that they would move you up into position, your canopy's open and you had to make sure your plotting board is locked because if they catapult you and the plotting board is not locked, it will decapitate you. So you had to make sure the plotting board is always, oh, they had a hook out there for your little finger, when you push your throttle forward, you locked your little finger over that arm so that when they catapulted, your arm wouldn't come back and take the throttle off. Probably a lot of people that flew the Corsair wondered that was for but that's what it was. An arm that came back, you locked your little finger over it. What happened they gave a "rev your engine" and you rev it up, the fly one gave you a two finger wind up and he would listen to your engine the same as you would and if everything sounded good, he'd drop his arm, oh, you'd salute him, tell him you're ready and he would drop his arm and they'd launch you and you had to catch it, your oil coolers and canopy open and flaps down and you had to catch it at about 50 feet in the air after takeoff and pick your wheels up as soon as possible and you always had a relative wind across the deck with the 15 degrees from starboard to port so that you didn't fly into the guy's slipstream ahead of you. When he took off, he would turn and the air, the relative wind across the flight deck would clear the slipstream off to the left. When you took off you always turned to the right. Then you'd join up on your buddies in formation of four.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was the stall speed on the Corsair?

Mr. Schlag:

About 65 knots. We'd fly the pattern at 67.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was the top speed?

Mr. Schlag:

I think full throttle was about 480.

Mr. Misenhimer:

They'd really move out.

Mr. Schlag:

Well, I'm talking about being no bombs, no rockets, no ammunition.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What else happened?

Mr. Schlag:

When we were kamikazed? I'd just come back from a hop and went down to the mess hall to get something to eat. Once you're in combat you learned to listen to the guns going off. Five-inch guns you don't worry so much, then you hear the 40 calibers going, you get a little concerned, then you hear the 20 calibers going, then you hear the 50 calibers going, you know something's going to happen. I'm in the mess hall and I got a piece of lemon meringue pie halfway from my plate to my mouth that's when the kamikaze hit the number three elevator. When I heard that I went underneath the table. The table had a sixteenth of an inch aluminum top to it. Had no protection whatsoever. The word went out throughout the ship at this time "All unassigned personnel report to flight deck immediately." Well, I wasn't assigned so I went up on the flight deck and Doc Nice who was from Norristown was the flight surgeon, he grabbed me and he had a horse syringe about an inch and half in diameter, about eight inches long, full of morphine, I guess and what I would do was roll over the bodies and what he would do, he would give them a

shot of morphine to keep them alive so they wouldn't die of shock and the corpsman who was with him would put a tag on him showing that he had given morphine so they wouldn't give him a second shot and kill him. So my job was rolling over the bodies with the flight surgeon and when that was done I was assigned to a mule, that's like a garden tractor, and I was moving airplanes from the rear end of the carrier from the aft to the forward area so they could repair the elevator and the guys that were up flying, came back aboard the carrier, didn't know we'd been hit because the Marines repaired the number three elevator so it would take the weight of an airplane.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did that happen at?

Mr. Schlag:

Off the coast of Okinawa. We had another... Before the kamikaze hit we had a Betty.. It was flying up our fantail, it was going to hit us in the rear. They opened up with the five-inch guns and blew the rudder off this guy so he couldn't turn so the ship turned and when the Betty got abeam of the bridge they blasted him with a five-inch gun and blew the plane apart. The pieces of pilot ended up on our flight deck and the skipper said, "Sweepers, man your brooms and sweep the debris overboard." They swept the Japanese pilot off the deck. That was a Betty.

That's a twin engine like a B-25.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you have a date when you got hit by the kamikaze?

Mr. Schlag:

April something

Mr. Misenhimer:

So 1945

Mr. Schlag:

Yeah. I don't have that in front of me, no.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's close enough. What else happened?

Mr. Schlag:

When we got hit by the kamikaze, they took the ship to Guam to see if they could repair it. No luck. They took it back to Hawaii to repair it, no luck. So they said the only place to repair it is at Bakers Point in San Francisco so we all came back to San Francisco then. The skipper, John Hyland, who was the commander of TAG10, he flew to San Francisco from Hawaii and made arrangements for a stratocruiser, I think they call it, four engine transport, Boeing, to haul the squadron and anyone that wanted to, from the West Coast to Boston and then a week later they'd come along and pick you up and take you back to California. So I signed up for that and I spent 14 days leave Stateside. I visited my mother, who thought I was out in combat, and visited my girlfriend in suburban Philadelphia at that time. I got off in Pittsburgh and went down and visited my folks in Wheeling and I had a buddy of mine who was still at Cape May in New Jersey in the CASU Unit in dive bombers. He came back to Pittsburgh and picked me up and flew me to Cape May and I came up to Philadelphia and made time with the wife to be and then I picked up the plane in Philadelphia and flew with them back to California and then back aboard the carrier and back out to combat. They repaired it in California. There were, I think, nine fatalities as a result of the kamikaze.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then you went back to the Pacific?

Mr. Schlag:

Back out to combat, yeah. On the first tour of combat we had F4U1Ds. That's a three-bladed prop and the second tour out we had F4U4s, four-bladed prop. And the second tour was when we went to Okinawa and the battleship Yamato.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now the Yamato was sunk early April.

Mr. Schlag:

Well, we were on it. It was our squadron that did it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So, I'm trying to get my dates straight here. Were you hit by the kamikaze after the Yamato or before the Yamato?

Mr. Schlag:

Before the Yamato.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh, before the Yamato.

Mr. Schlag:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You say that was in April 1945?

Mr. Schlag:

It might have been before. April 1 was when the invasion took place of Okinawa. And prior to that was when we had all the activity with the kamikaze. So, we might have been kamikazed before that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

OK, but I think April 6 was the date that the Yamato was sunk.

Mr. Schlag:

We were there. I was photo plane escort. George Spooner was the photo plane. He flew an F6F.

If you saw a picture of the mushroom cloud from the Yamato, he took that picture. I was his escort and I carried, all of us carried bombs, I guess. I carried a full load of ammunition and a 500-pound bomb. When I got up there, I was supposed to drop the bomb, of course, and I looked over at the Yamato and it looked like a beehive with all these airplanes around it I said I'm not going over there, I might fly into one of my buddies, you know. So in front of the Yamato was a cruiser and I picked that baby out and dove on that. I went it at about 12,000 feet and I hit the sucker on the side, cause when you drop a bomb in dive bombing they taught us how to pull up sort of like an upside down climb and you could look back and see what your bomb did. I saw it go down and it wasn't until about two years ago I found out the name of the ship was the Akagi.

That was a Japanese cruiser.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then when you came back from being repaired where did you go then?

Mr. Schlag:

We were repaired and then that's Okinawa and then the Yamato. After the Yamato, the war was over.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well, the war didn't get over until August 15.

Mr. Schlag:

OK, we were supporting whatever activity is going on. We probably worked over Okinawa, Ammeioshima, Sakashima which are the islands north of Okinawa so they wouldn't send troops or more help down to the Japs.

Mr. Misenhimer:

They were doing a lot of strafing and bombing on the mainland. Kyosho, Honshu and all of that.

Mr. Schlag:

Yeah, we were doing that. Our squadron was doing a lot of that. USA was one of the cities I recall that we went in on and USA, remember back in the Depression days we were not buying anything made in Japan. So the Japanese went and changed the name of their city to USA, pronounced u-sa. When you look at something made in USA if they'd had a dot after the U, the S and the A, you'd know it was made in America. If you didn't have a dot after those letters, you knew it was made in Japan. Then when the war was over, they took us our carrier and put us on Saipan. We lived up at a place called Marpy Point. We watched our B-29s take off from Saipan. They were, in our opinion, they weren't such good planes. Almost every takeoff, one of them would land in the ocean, wouldn't make it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

They were overloading them so terribly.

Mr. Schlag:

Whatever they were doing, about every time they had a launch they would lose one. I read an article that they lost, that the percentage of loss for operational was the highest of any they had. We were on Saipan and then our TAG10, he knew his way around, I'll put it that way. So we were there until we were going to get some kind of transportation back to the States. The war was over and so he found out that there was a carrier called the Barnes going to Tokyo to pick up

Japanese aircraft and he wrangled a deal where our Air Group 10 was assigned the air group to the carrier. Now you can't kick an air group off a carrier legally. So we went into Tokyo Bay and we parked there for a whole month. What they did was, what they were doing was loading all kinds of Japanese aircraft aboard the Barnes to bring them back to the States for inspection and testing. So I got to go through Yokuska, Kamakura, Zurcher, Tokyo, all those places, we made tours of them. In there touring Japan and we're walking around with our P38s on our shoulder. We got to see what the cities looked like. They were just burned out. It wasn't unusual to see a four by four brick platform about six feet high with a safe on it and the water pipes. You'd see acres and acres of that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any interaction with the local Japanese people?

Mr. Schlag:

No, they were as friendly as they could be. Even the little kids spoke good English. They were ready to come to America.

Mr. Misenhimer:

They were friendly enough were they?

Mr. Schlag:

Oh, yeah. Very friendly.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, on August 6 when they dropped the first atomic bomb, where were you then?

Mr. Schlag:

I don't know. I'd have to back and start reconstructing where I was.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you recall hearing about it?

Mr. Schlag:

No, I don't. I don't recall hearing anything about it until after it was all over.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, on April 12 of 1945, President Roosevelt died. Did you hear about that?

Mr. Schlag:

We might have had something aboard ship but I don't recall.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then May 8 of 1945, when Germany surrendered? Did you all hear about that?

Mr. Schlag:

No. They had a, they called it a shipboard newspaper. Might have been on that but we were in combat and that didn't seem to affect us. We're still there. We were concerned with what we were doing more than with what was happening outside.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Let's see. What else happened after you went to Japan, you came back to the States on the Barnes?

Mr. Schlag:

And what's happened while we were there, the skipper of the ship went and made a swap with the Japanese. He gave them food for rifles so everybody aboard the ship got a Japanese rifle, including the air group. So I got a Japanese rifle as a trophy, I guess, and coming back to the States aboard that ship the ship was supposed to feed us, well the ship's company got the food and we got what was left. When we'd go back to mess, we could see what they had and thought, oh, boy, steak tonight. Yeah, that's what they had and we got chicken or hamburger or something

you know. So you have to remember this is VF17 guys, these guys were in combat long before us and they formed a committee and they went and stole a three by four tray of upside down pineapple cake from the bakery and gave it to us and we had to hurry up and eat it and they threw the pan overboard and they had guys running all over the ship looking for the pineapple upside down cake the ship's company was supposed to have and didn't. I remember that. And then they got lost coming back to the States outside San Francisco Bay. They couldn't find it. So we had to sit around and go in circles outside San Francisco until the fog lifted.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you have a date when you got back to the States?

Mr. Schlag:

In September, the 19th, somewhere in there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

1945, OK.

Mr. Schlag:

It was sometime in September anyhow. I think it was. Might have been in August. It was September 1945.

Mr. Misenhimer:

September or October.

Mr. Schlag:

Somewhere in there, yeah. What they did was, they disbanded the squadron in Alameda and you could go any place you wanted to be discharged. They wanted to discharge me in Alameda and I said, No, I want to go to the East Coast so they gave me orders to Norfolk. I don't know where all the other guys went but to get to Norfolk, I had to take a train from Alameda to Norfolk

Mr. Misenhimer:

Your uncle worked for the railroad? What was that?

Mr. Schlag:

I had an uncle that worked for the Pennsylvania Railroad in the office in Pittsburgh and he said whenever you go to get a ticket always get a round trip military ticket. So I bought a \$30 military from San Francisco to Norfolk. He said when you get there, cash the other half in so it cost me \$15. You have to remember we're still functioning on the Depression days. So I end up in Norfolk and I said well, I'm going to get out. The guy said you won't get out. We got all kinds of jobs for you pilots. I said what have you got? He said we got Operation Frostbite, flying Bearcats off of Newfoundland. Now you remember I told you we had a nice carrier landing checkoff out at Quonset before? That stuck in my mind. I don't up in there in that cool weather. I don't want it. He said we don't have anything more. I said when are you going to have more? He said next week. So I come to Philadelphia, making time with the wife to be and went down on the Monday for new orders and he said we got orders for California. I said I just come from California. That's all we got. I did this for over a month, up and back. One day I went there and he said, well what do you want? I said What do you mean? He said I got any place you want to go. So I picked celestial navigation, Alameda, California. So I went back to California by train. You couldn't fly because of priority in those days.

When I got to California, before I got there, the girlfriend and I decided to get married so I sent for her. She came out and we were married in Alameda and I went to the celestial navigation school at San Christian in multi-engines. So out of there I flew C54s from San Diego up to Alaska. They let us check out in a KLM, the Martin Mars. I don't know if you know what that is. That's the largest flying boat next to the Hughes boat. Then they moved me to Seattle,

Washington, VR7, VR8? It was a VR squad anyhow and my run was to take off from Seattle, fly to San Francisco to Alameda and then to San Diego, turn around and come back to Alameda, Seattle, stay overnight, Seattle, Kodiak, stay overnight, Kodiak, Adak, stay overnight. From Adak to Tulan and come back and stay overnight at Adak, back to Kodiak, Kodiak to Seattle. That was the run.

We were married in April. That would be from April until September. That was what I was doing, flying four-engine transports. We were delivering mail, food and personnel up and bringing stretcher cases back. The idea was to bring back anyone that was scheduled for medical treatment at a Navy hospital all the way to San Diego, rather than put them on a ship for a week or two. That was what we were doing. I did that until I got out.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When did you get discharged then?

Mr. Schlag:

In September of 1946.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was the highest rank you got to?

Mr. Schlag:

Lieutenant, JG, while I was in.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you get a higher rank later or something?

Mr. Schlag:

Yes, I ended up being a Lieutenant Commander.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You stayed in the Reserves?

Mr. Schlag:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You ever get activated again in the reserves?

Mr. Schlag:

No, I was completely out and home in Wheeling, West Virginia, and my buddy lived in Columbus, Ohio, a guy by the name of Dave Coile. He was with the telephone company in Columbus and I was with the telephone company in Wheeling. He joined the Reserve in Columbus and buzzed my house on an Easter Sunday morning in a Corsair. I got the bug again, went over and joined the Reserve at Columbus and as I told you, I didn't have college when I went in the Navy so I got in at John Halbo and lived in Collinswood, New Jersey, and he said, Look, go to Drexel and you can go to night school at Drexel and still keep a job. So I transferred with the telephone company to suburban Philadelphia and went to Drexel night school. When I did that, I also transferred to Willow Grove Naval Air Station in the Reserve. I flew in the Reserve at Willow Grove until I got my 20 years in.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What type of plane did you fly there?

Mr. Schlag:

Well, I flew Corsairs, strange as it seems. I flew Corsairs at Columbus and Corsair at Willow Grove and then when the Korean War started they took the Corsair away and gave us F6Fs. So since we weren't qualified with carrier qualification in F6Fs, they took us down on a two week cruise. We went to Chesapeake, Virginia, did a lot of field carrier landing practice and then went

out and made eight landings in F6Fs aboard a carrier, the fleet carrier in the Atlantic and got us qualified. The unusual thing is that none of us, there wasn't a single accident in all that time, even though it had been some time since we flew on board a carrier but then all of us were qualified in the Corsair but the F6F was an easy plane to fly. We went back to Willow Grove and then they took the F6Fs away from us again and gave us Corsairs. So while I'm flying Corsairs I made full Lieutenant.

Then we were supposed to transition from props to jets. I went through a training class on that and the word was we don't have enough airplanes so we're going to have to kick somebody out so I transitioned over into multi-engine, anti-sub squadron which flew F2Fs. So before we get the F2Fs, they had another airplane called the AF2S and the AF2W.

In the hunter killer team, one had a guppy on the bottom, the other had a bomb bay and that didn't last but a couple months and then they replaced those with twin-engine F2Fs, anti-sub plane. I flew in there until I became Lieutenant Commander and now I'm the same rank as the skipper and you can't be that so I transitioned back into multi-engine C54s because the skipper was a full commander and now I'm flying to Europe so I ended up flying to Europe all the time I'm in the VR squadron. That's why I got out of the VR squadron after my 20 years.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was the morale in your VC10?

Mr. Schlag:

Oh, very, very high. The other thing I didn't tell you, when I was flying F2Fs, we went to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and we worked with the regular fleet, playing war games in the Gulf of Mexico. I'm Lieutenant Commander this time and I just made it by the way and he said anybody who wants to go aboard a submarine, report to sub base at six in the morning. So I go out six in

the morning, salute the colors, walk the plank, go aboard the sub, some one hollers attention, I snap to attention and a sailor says to me, "Sir, it's for you." I'm the same rank as the commanding officer of the sub. That was an experience. Called the U.S.S. Grenadier 325 and we made 12 dives. Didn't give me a nickels worth of training. Just do what we do.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was it like to be submerged in that submarine?

Mr. Schlag:

I came back home and told the wife, if I go to war again I want to go aboard a sub. They let me do everything. I handled the helm and it's like flying an airplane. You have a rudder, you know, you bank it just like you do an airplane.

Mr. Misenhimer:

It had a stick, huh?

Mr. Schlag:

Yeah, real nice. The other thing is the periscope, crystal clear. You wouldn't believe how good that is.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I've seen pictures taken through them but that always makes you wonder how could you get a picture through a periscope. They're awfully good.

Mr. Schlag:

The other thing, we always thought they could just see on the water. They can tilt that periscope to look in the air, too. They don't tell you that, but they can.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What else happened?

Mr. Schlag:

Well, that's about it. I got out of the Navy then finally. I went from the anti-sub squadron into the multi-engine and flew to Europe. We would go over, we would leave the United States and land at Argentia, Newfoundland, take off from there for Terra Saua in the Azores and then go from there over to Port Leodi, North Africa and from there over to Naples. That was one route. The other one you go from Argentia, Newfoundland to Keplovick, Iceland and to Prestwick, Scotland, and then down to Rhine Main, Germany. What we were doing was hauling personal effects of the teachers that were teaching the American children in schools over there, taking their personal effects over and we were bringing cadavers back, flying support to the regular Navy Air Force.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What would you consider your most frightening time?

Mr. Schlag:

Most what?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Frightening, scary?

Mr. Schlag:

When the engine stopped. I got halfway out of the cockpit, going to hit the parachute and the engine started. This is peacetime, war's over and we're supposed to give a show of force over the Japanese forces in Shanghai, China and we're not too high, you know, it was like about a thousand feet. But a lot of airplanes and all of a sudden, I don't know why the engine stopped, but it did, and I almost went out. I got back in and I didn't close the cockpit until I got back aboard the carrier. That was the most scary.

Mr. Misenhimer:

On September 2, 1945, they had the big ceremony in Tokyo Bay. Were you around there anywhere?

Mr. Schlag:

No, I think I was probably on Saipan.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's on September 2. What medals and ribbons did you get?

Mr. Schlag:

Oh, gosh. I know I got four Air Medals, I know that. If you got an ace you get something else if you get five. I got four Air Medals. You know, Asiatic, Pacific and so forth

Mr. Misenhimer:

How about battle stars? Did they give you all battle stars?

Mr. Schlag:

What did you get those for?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well,

Mr. Schlag:

No, no, no. You mean being in certain battles? No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, right.

Mr. Schlag:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I wasn't sure how they did that with you. Did you ever hear Tokyo Rose on the radio?

Mr. Schlag:

Oh, yes. She told us we were sunk and we went to California, repaired and back out to combat and she didn't even know we were out there. She said we were sunk.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you think of her?

Mr. Schlag:

We just laughed about it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever cross the equator?

Mr. Schlag:

No, never did. Come close to it but never did.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you get home with any souvenirs?

Mr. Schlag:

Nothing to speak of. I just got that Japanese rifle that they gave us aboard the Barnes while we were in Tokyo.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You still have that?

Mr. Schlag:

My son made a sporting rifle out of it. They have a chrysanthemum on the barrel you know and they took, the Japanese took a file to that because that's a sacred thing for them and I told my son (that's the oldest boy that's 61 now) I said you made ammunition and everything for it and I said,

Look, these might be booby-trapped, I don't know, so when you fire it, get away from it. Set it up so you can fire it from a distance. He did and the thing blew up. He's left-handed, my son is, and if he had fired that gun it'd take his face right off his head. So that's it. He hasn't fired it since.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever see any USO shows?

Mr. Schlag:

One. In San Francisco.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And who was there? Any big names?

Mr. Schlag:

No. No big names, just the run of the mill magicians, singers, and dancers.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Schlag:

Only in Alaska. I was hauling stretcher cases back to San Diego. We had to divert from Kodiak to Anchorage and because of weather. They said it would probably be another half hour to 45 minutes before we could take off and clear to Kodiak so we didn't want to get the guys' stretchers off, unload the airplane, put them in the hospital and had to bring them back so we kept the engines running, kept the planes warm and we went and got coffee and donuts for the guys on the stretchers and the Red Cross wanted to charge us for them. So what we did we presented our donation card that we contributed, so if you wanted, go see somebody else, we

paid our fair share. I think they were mad at us. We left without paying. That's the only sad case we had with the Red Cross.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you got out, did you have any trouble adjusting to civilian life?

Mr. Schlag:

No, not really. Financially as I told you the wife and I were pretty much adjusted to doing without because of the Depression so I dropped from, well, I was getting paid flight skins for Lieutenant JG at the time, flying out of Seattle and between getting foreign duty pay and hazard pay which was pretty lucrative at that time I went back to \$56.00 a week and we managed but, you know, you just do without, that's all. You change your mode of life and we ended up with seven children. All went to college and we paid for it. It worked out real good.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you use your G.I. Bill for anything?

Mr. Schlag:

Yeah. When I went to Drexel I used that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How about reunions? How many reunions have you all had?

Mr. Schlag:

I don't know how many they've had but think I've made seven of them. The one we're going to have in October is going to be the last.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's going to be on the Intrepid there in New York, right?

Mr. Schlag:

Yeah, that's correct.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I think the last one was in Fredericksburg at the museum there.

Mr. Schlag:

Yes, that's correct and the one before that was Branson, Missouri and we've been to Orlando, Florida. We've been to Washington, D.C., San Diego and Reno, Nevada. Those are the only ones I remember. I think that's the only ones I ever went to. Oh, and one on the U.S.S. Intrepid about six years ago.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well, let's see, anything else?

Mr. Schlag:

No, still flying.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Still flying. Yep, got your 150.

Mr. Schlag:

Two Thursdays ago I took my flight physical and I passed so I'm flying again, or still, I should say.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Of course I'm sure you're instrument rated, right?

Mr. Schlag:

Yep. I'm multi-engine, land and sea and instrument rated. Too much in a Cessna 150 but it does help you make decisions.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh, yes, that's right.

Mr. Schlag:

Flying in Columbus, Ohio, in the Reserves, I'm coming in for a landing and I hear a voice of a commercial airline and I recognize it as the man who was my best man in my wedding in Alameda, California, a guy by the name of Bernard Michael Dunn. So I said, Hey, Bernie, what are you doing, where are you going? And he said, "Charlie, I'll meet you over at operations." He was flying for TWA in a C47 and his run was flying flowers from Kansas City to New York and he didn't have to wear a TWA uniform and he just had a baseball cap and a khaki shirt and trousers like he did in the Navy. And I recognized his voice.

Fast forward. I'm flying out of Argentia, Newfoundland to the largest Air Force base in Tarasua and when you fly across the Atlantic you have to give a position report periodically and the frequency you use is the same for the commercial airlines. Lo and behold I hear this voice that said, Hey, Bernie, where are you going? He says, Who's this? I recognized his voice and he's flying a jet over to Orley. He took off after me to land before me. I was flying four-engine propeller and he flying a four-engine jet. He retired as a senior captain when he was sixty. He lived in a place near Hershey, Pennsylvania. He had a Mooney and he used to fly his Mooney to New York and then fly to Europe. He had a dream run. He would go over on a Monday, come back on a Tuesday, had Wednesday off, go over on a Thursday, come back on a Friday, had Saturday and Sunday off. He lived in Litiz, Pennsylvania, that's where it was. When he retired at the age of 60, they gave him a clean bill of health and he had a gymnasium above his garage in Lititz and he would go out and work out before breakfast and his wife would call him and one day she called him and he didn't answer. She went up to see what was wrong and he was dead

across the barbells. One month after he retired. He was a senior captain on TWA at the time he retired. He stayed in aviation and I didn't.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well, Charley, I want to thank you again for your time today.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I'll be talking to you later then.

Mr. Schlag:

OK

Mr. Misenhimer:

OK, have a good day.

Mr. Schlag:

Righto.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Bye.

Mr. Schlag:

Thank you very much.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Thank you. Bye.

End of Interview

Transcribed by:

Janice Conner

Winamac, IN 46996

June 21, 2010

Oral History by:

Richard Misenhimer

P.O. Box 3453

Alice, Texas 78333

Home: (361) 664-4071

Cell: (361) 701-5848