

VETERAN: EARL DEAN MILTON

INTERVIEW DATE: AUGUST 12, 2011

INTERVIEWER: VIRGINIA CLOWER

COURT REPORTER: STEPHANIE MOSES

MRS. CLOWER: Good afternoon. Today is August the 12th, 2011. My name is Virginia Clower. I am conducting an oral history interview for the Veterans History Project at the Court Reporting Institute in Dallas, Texas.

My transcriber is Stephanie Moses, and our interview will be with Earl Dean Milton.

First of all, will you state your name?

MR. MILTON: Earl Dean Milton.

MRS. CLOWER: And your address.

MR. MILTON: 12346 Alfa Romeo Way, Frisco, Texas 75033.

MRS. CLOWER: Frisco.

Where were you born?

MR. MILTON: Mexia, Texas, 19 -- 2/4/25, 1924.

MRS. MILTON: '25.

MR. MILTON: February 4th, 1925.

MRS. CLOWER: And what were the names of your parents?

MR. MILTON: Walter R. Milton and Ada Alice Howell Milton.

MRS. CLOWER: And so you grew up in Mexia? You spent your childhood there?

MR. MILTON: Until I was four or five. And the 1929 crash on Wall Street sent the country into a depression. My father lost his job in the oil field, and we moved to the Panhandle of Texas and rented a farm, and we farmed until H.L. Hunt hit the oil field in Texas, and we

immediately moved to Texas and went to work in the oil fields, and he stayed there the rest of his working life.

MRS. CLOWER: Okay. And you were there.

When did you join the service?

MR. MILTON: When I turned 18 I caught a bus to Austin and volunteered for the Air Force.

MRS. CLOWER: You were a volunteer. You were not drafted.

Where were you living at the time? You said you caught a bus to Austin.

MR. MILTON: Corpus Christi.

MRS. CLOWER: Corpus Christi. Okay.

Why did you join?

MR. MILTON: To keep from being drafted.

MRS. CLOWER: That's a good reason.

What year was it? What year did you join the service?

MR. MILTON: Oh, my 18th birthday I took a bus to Austin to the Air Force Headquarters and volunteered that day.

MRS. CLOWER: Well, what year was that? Had the war started?

MR. MILTON: It was on my 18th birthday. Yes, the war had started.

MRS. CLOWER: Okay. Where were you when the Japanese

bombed Pearl Harbor?

MR. MILTON: I was a junior in high school working at the drug store as a soda jerk in a little town called Wright City, Texas, between Tyler and Henderson.

And I was on duty that Sunday when we heard over the radio. The next day was Monday, went to school, they took us over to the auditorium, tuned in to the radio, and we listened to President Roosevelt address Congress and asked them to declare a war on Japan.

And I was staying in school until I turned 18, and I had already graduated. After I graduated, I was still 17. Then I went -- went into a training program to help out with the war effort, and they wanted me to learn how to be a sheet metal worker repairing aircrafts.

So they put me over in Marshall, Texas, and trained me there, and then sent me to Corpus Christi where I was trained there to repair aircraft for the Navy.

I graduated and went to work out at the Air -- Naval Air Force, and they said, No, you're not 18, you can't work here. So I went to work for a company unloading freight cars from the railroad into their warehouse.

When I turned 18 I caught a bus to

Austin, volunteered for the Air Force. They accepted me. They sent me home to wait to be told where to go and when.

So I went back home, lived with my mother and dad, and just fooled around doing odd jobs. Got my letter to report to San Antonio, Texas. My father took me to the railroad, put me on the train, and I got off in San Antonio. And then they took me out to the Army Air Base, did my physical and swore me in.

Then they sent me to Wichita Falls, Sheppard Air Force Base, where I learned to march, march, march.

MRS. CLOWER: I was going to ask what do you remember, and you remember marching.

MRS. MILTON: What do you remember about the marching?

MR. MILTON: When I -- when the -- after a few weeks they let me go in on the weekend, put on my civilian clothes and go into the town. And I put on my Sunday shoes, started to take a walk, and pulled my legs up so fast I could hardly walk. I was so light, I nearly fell.

MRS. CLOWER: Oh, goodness.

Okay. So after -- after you were in Wichita Falls, what was next?

MR. MILTON: West Texas State Normal College, Lubbock,

Texas, where they would classify me as a trainee for bombardier, navigator, or pilot. We stayed there a few weeks, and I graduated to train as a navigator.

MRS. CLOWER: Is this what you wanted?

MR. MILTON: That's what I wanted.

MRS. CLOWER: Okay. So you were in the right place.

All right. Now then, what happened? What was -- did you choose a certain type of plane that you were on?

MR. MILTON: No. They actually trained me in B-17s until right at the very last when we got to work with the B-29. But then when I graduated from that, we flew up to a place to get our plane to fly over to Saipan.

MRS. CLOWER: Now, what year was this? Was this during the war?

MR. MILTON: This was late '44 when I was training at Pyote, Texas, and we got our plane. And just after January 1st of '45 we flew to Saipan.

MRS. CLOWER: All right. Now, it sounds like that in Saipan you saw some action.

MR. MILTON: What was that?

MRS. MILTON: What happened at Saipan?

MR. MILTON: Well, we actually landed at Tinian, and they told us, You're in the wrong place, you've been assigned to Saipan. So we took off, went one mile to --

two miles to Saipan and landed there.

And then they put me through all kind of trainings and registration and flying with another crew until they felt like I was capable of navigating a plane to Japan, and then put our crew with all kind of training, and we did some fake bombing, so to speak. And after two or three weeks, we were ready to do our own bombing of Japan. So sometime around March we went on our first mission as a crew. And she's got all my notes on those. 23 bombing missions, 2 weather missions.

We discovered the jetstream until the B-29 went high enough to be -- we used radar to approach Japan, and we climbed higher and higher and higher, and all of a sudden we were going backwards in the jetstream. We had to come down to get to Japan.

MRS. CLOWER: For goodness sakes.

Now, this was the B-26 you were on now?

MRS. MILTON: No, B-29.

MRS. CLOWER: B-29. Sorry.

MR. MILTON: Trained in a B-17.

MRS. CLOWER: Okay. So now you trained in a B-17. And how did you train? What was -- what did you do to --

MR. MILTON: The main thing they did with me is they took my pilot and me, and they put me up in the front

end of the B-17 and put a -- what do you call it? -- a -- where I couldn't see out. They made me sit down and I couldn't see out, and we -- we took off. Went for about, oh, 45 minutes, and they then said, Okay, now come back here, you take over and you get us back home.

MRS. CLOWER: Oh, my goodness.

MR. MILTON: So I had all my instruments. I sat down at the navigator table. I got out my Instruments of Conduct, took a shot on a little star, shot on a little star, shot on a star, came back, figured out where we were, measured the distance that we had traveled, and figured out the wind speed and directions.

And then I worked out how to get back on the wind speed directions, gave my pilot, training pilot, the instrument -- the direction of the flow and the speed that he would be going against the wind, and gave him the estimated time of arrival.

They put the curtain back around me. Thirty minutes later or so they said, Okay, Mr. Milton -- or, not Mister, Lieutenant Milton, we are going to pull the curtain out and let you see where we are. They pulled the curtain out, and they said, "Now, look down," and there was the base.

MRS. CLOWER: Oh, wonderful. You did a good job.

So from there, then, you went into the

B-29s with the bombs, right?

MR. MILTON: We stayed there and trained the gunners and all of the crew, did some practice bombing, made a practice run to Cuba, and after two or three weeks of that they said, "Okay, you're ready to go to work. In the morning, pack up your bags, we're going to fly to San Francisco and we'll check you out from there to go to overseas."

So from there I left the U.S. right after New Year's Day, and we got through San Francisco, went through procedures there, then took off, went to Hawaii, and then stayed the night there. Then we flew to Guadalupene, spent the night there, then we flew to Tinian, and they kept us a couple hours and was told, "Now, go to Saipan." So we ended up that night in Saipan.

MRS. CLOWER: All right. In Saipan, what did you do? What was your mission?

MR. MILTON: Took about two weeks before they would let us bomb Japan. We went through training, all kind of training, and --

MRS. CLOWER: Did you actually drop bombs while you were in the Saigon Atoll?

MR. MILTON: While we were on Saipan we bombed some of the little vacant islands up there. There were a chain,

chain of islands, they had no high buildings. They would give us a target. And then sometime they would let us do that same thing, go fly out, and then I'd give them a trip on how to get back to it. They would put us through a test.

MRS. CLOWER: I was going to say, they were very exact, weren't they?

Okay. So we're ready to fly to Japan, right? So what was that like? What happened?

MR. MILTON: We had a runway that was about a mile long, and we had a tough general, LeMay. He said, "You can carry all of the gasoline that you want to put in that plane, but you must carry these bombs."

So they would load bombs down, and our pilot and engineer would take on the gasoline. And that's all we could take off with. And if you got too heavy, you couldn't get in the air, so we had to be real careful.

But on Saipan, we had a runway that went through a bluff, and then in the ocean, and that bluff gave us 500 feet that we could nose down and get speed up.

We were glad it was Saipan, because Tinian, next door to us, had no bluff. They just went off right in the air and then the water just a few feet.

Several of them didn't make it, would crash into the water.

But LeMay says, "You must carry this amount of bombs. You determine how much gasoline you want."

MRS. CLOWER: So when you say "carry bombs," are we talking four on each side, or how would they -- do you remember?

MR. MILTON: The B-29 had two separate bomb bays. I sat right here. There was a bomb bay here, a bomb bay here, and then our gunners back here. And they loaded that without asking us. That was done by General LeMay's people. And they told us how many bombs we had; you figure out how much gasoline you want.

MRS. CLOWER: Enough to get home.

MRS. MILTON: How many bombs?

MR. MILTON: How many bombs? Well, it depends. Some of the bombs weighed 500 pounds. We might have 20 of those. If it was a fire bomb, some of those only weighed 100 pounds each. So you would have several hundred of them. So it would depend on how big a bomb they wanted. But I didn't put them in there, they did that.

MRS. CLOWER: Okay. But your job was to get to Japan, then, with this loaded plane. That was your job,

navigate.

MR. MILTON: My job was to get us -- direct us to there and direct us back.

MRS. CLOWER: Did you -- were you in a plane that dropped a bomb on Japan?

MR. MILTON: On the Atomic Bomb?

MRS. CLOWER: No, just any bomb.

MRS. MILTON: Were you in a plane that dropped a bomb?

MR. MILTON: Twenty-three times.

MRS. CLOWER: Twenty-three times you were on a bombing mission.

MRS. MILTON: What kind of bomb? Fire bombing.

MR. MILTON: Well, it depends on what the target was. I didn't have to determine that. We were under orders if we were going to take a fire bomb or a big blast-type of bomb, depending on the target. They made those decisions.

MRS. CLOWER: Did you know when you left on the flight, did you know what was going to happen, or did you just know the location?

MR. MILTON: Our pilot, who was a commander of our crew, 11 men, would have that information.

MRS. CLOWER: Yeah. So you knew, then, what you were getting into, what you were going to do.

MR. MILTON: My job was just to get us there and get us

back.

MRS. CLOWER: Who was the best pilot that you flew with? Do you remember one pilot that you really thought was really good?

MR. MILTON: The name of a pilot I thought was really good?

Well, I didn't have much chance of judging the other ones, just the ones that came back.

MRS. CLOWER: That's right. Those are the good ones.

MR. MILTON: A lot of them didn't come back.

MS. CLOWER: I'm afraid you're right on that.

Now, after the war -- Well, okay, you were a navigator in a plane. Was it the same type of plane when we dropped the bombs on Japan, the atomic bombs?

MR. MILTON: It was the identical plane, yes. It was actually a test, used in everything that we had been using on Japan.

They had a contest. They had about five crews training at Roswell, New Mexico, and the ones that rated the highest was used to drop the one bomb. The ones that were rated next, and that was us, was used to drop instruments on parachutes to when the bomb was dropped.

Our bombardier was -- we were on radio,

and when this bombing plane was coming over, we knew it was coming over, and they let us know when it was dropped. And our bomb bay doors were already open, our bombardier released it, and these parachute things floated down, and then we turned tail and ran.

The bomb went off, shook us up pretty good, and then we went back and landed.

And then that night they assigned us, along with two or three others, we'd go out for two hours, and they'd put a solenoid thing, film, in my pocket right here, and we were told, Follow the cloud, and when you get to the center of the cloud, take a radar fix, notify us back here where you are, and then circle back around, come back and go through the cloud. And when you get to the highest sensitivity of the radioactivity, I took a radio fix, a radar fix, we wired it back to them. After two hours, then, okay, come back down, they sent another plane up.

When we landed, they took my film, took it inside, came back and said, "You're grounded, you've had all the radioactivity you can take."

MRS. CLOWER: Oh, my goodness.

MRS. MILTON: Let me clarify something. You're talking now about the Bikini Atoll Atomic Bomb test?

MR. MILTON: Oh, yes, in 1946.

MRS. MILTON: Now, her original question was, was the B-29 the plane that dropped the Atomic Bomb on Nagasaki and Hiroshima?

MR. MILTON: It was the same kind of plane. It wasn't the same plane, but it was a B-29.

MRS. CLOWER: Did that plane come from the same base that you were now on?

MRS. MILTON: Tinian.

MRS. CLOWER: Yeah. Okay. So there were two bases that the planes were coming out. And so your base, you were practicing for the Atomic Bomb.

MRS. MILTON: No, not at this point. He was just fire bombing from Saipan. Tinian is where they based the plane with the Atomic Bomb.

MRS. CLOWER: But he did fly from Saipan to Japan.

MRS. MILTON: Many times. Twenty, fifty-something times.

MRS. CLOWER. Doing fire bombing.

MRS. MILTON: Fifty-five times total.

MRS. CLOWER: All right. When you were flying to Japan and -- what was that like? Was there enemy fire coming at you as you're flying into Japan?

MR. MILTON: No. We avoided -- went from Saipan to Japan was a place called Iwo Jima. They had an air base there. And they came down and bombed us on Saipan, and

the Navy finally came in and took that island.

MRS. CLOWER: At a high cost, but they took it.

MR. MILTON: Iwo Jima, the famous statue in Washington, D.C. of the men on top with the flag. That was the picture taken there when they captured the Island of Iwo Jima.

MRS. CLOWER: When you were in Saipan during that time, right?

MR. MILTON: I used that place five times to get back before we were coming back from Japan before we go to Saipan. Had to land there if we either had problems or out of gas or whatever.

MRS. CLOWER: So you could land in Iwo Jima in between Saipan and Japan, and so you were very familiar with that island then.

MR. MILTON: We were familiar with it, number one, because they used it to bomb us on Saipan.

MRS. CLOWER: I didn't know that.

Well, so -- now -- my question was, when you're flying into Japan, did you -- when you were in the air over Japan, was there any kind of people firing at you or land --

MR. MILTON: Yes. Yes, they had fighter pilots that would know we were coming, come up and meet us, because we always used formation bombing usually. We would take

off from Saipan and have a long review form. We were close to Japan. We'd get here and circle and wait, and then all of us go in together.

The firing pilots would come up from Japan shooting at us, and then we would all go in and release our bombs from -- at the same time. But occasionally we'd just do individually, depending on whatever the bosses told us to do.

MRS. CLOWER: Yeah, right. Now, when you say you met together, how many planes were in a squadron? Is that what you call them?

MR. MILTON: Several hundred.

MRS. CLOWER: Oh, my. Okay.

MR. MILTON: The last one, we had, I think, 500. The Atomic Bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima. No word from Japan on surrendering. We didn't have an embassy there, and they didn't have one in Washington, D.C. They couldn't surrender. So we thought they would go through Russia, but no word.

So they -- they got this idea of getting an airplane, sending it into Saipan and Guam to do a big, big, big formation bombing. Then they dropped Nagasaki Atomic Bomb.

Still no word. So we got -- they took -- okay, go, boys, go. Must have been 5-, 600 planes. We

were Number 2. So you would fly Number 1, and if he gets hit, Second Number 2 takes over.

So we came up on this bay, water here, ocean here, a bay here, and Tawaraya right there. Still no word from Japan to surrender.

So we got right here, and just about ready to release our bombs when this front plane got hit and it dropped out. And so then we took over, Number 2. And all this time our tail gunners watching that plane spiral down, and he was screaming, "Jump, boys, jump. Jump, boys, jump." They hit the water. We never heard from them again.

So we released our bombs, and then everybody released theirs, and then we all went home.

MRS. CLOWER: And when did you get word that Japan had surrendered?

MR. MILTON: Within 24 hours after that.

MRS. CLOWER: So it was quite a show, I'm sure.

You were the navigator. Did you ever get lost?

MR. MILTON: Not ever going to Japan, but coming back as a navigator, we had been -- you know, we had bad relations with Russia at this time, and I spent 30 days in Germany flying next door to Russia trying to scare them.

MRS. CLOWER: Okay.

MR. MILTON: And 30 days over in Japan flying next door through Russia. When we finished that, everybody was okay, go to Alaska, Anchorage, Alaska, and then from there go home.

I was scared on that one because all we had was stars. And I kept getting my instruments checking, checking, checking. But the radio telephone -- several planes got lost, and that put my pilot wondering about me, and I wondering also because we had clouds at nighttime, waiting to catch a star here, a star here. We landed safely.

MRS. CLOWER: Good.

MR. MILTON: Several of them didn't. So that was my worst scare there.

MRS. CLOWER: Right. Star navigation and a cloudy day in strange air. That's quite a story.

MR. MILTON: I --

MRS. CLOWER: Go ahead.

MR. MILTON: I called American Airlines one day getting ready to make a speech at the school. I called them and said, "Connect me, please, with your navigation department." There was a pause there, and they said, "Wait a minute, let me try to find somebody."

So they switched me around. I told the

guy what I was trying to do. I was going to make a speech at one of the schools on my -- on navigation of an airplane, and I just wanted to talk to one of your navigators. They said, "Mr. Milton, we don't use navigators anymore."

MRS. CLOWER: It's all computerized. But what a wonderful experience for you, and thank goodness you were there to navigate those planes. You certainly have made a difference.

When you were saying you were flying along the coast of Russia, the year was that? The war was over, WWII was over, but we still were not friends with Russia; is that right?

MR. MILTON: In Europe, Russia invaded Germany from the other side. We all came up from this side and we met, and that became a line of resistance.

Russia wanted to occupy Germany, and we wanted to occupy Germany, along with England, so there was a stalemate. So we tried to scare Russia.

So I was stationed at near Fort Worth -- Tucson, Arizona, and then later Fort Worth. So we put together as many planes as they could find, flew us over to Germany. We would stay there 30 days and we would tack off, get a formation going, and fly up and down the Russian -- the border where Russia was, let them know we

had all this ability.

MRS. MILTON: Was this 1946?

MR. MILTON: Uh-huh.

And then we came -- after 30 days we came home. And a little while later we did the same thing over to Japan, and flew and stayed there in Japan 30 days, and each day or two take off, get a formation and go up and down the Russian coast.

MRS. CLOWER: Now were you in B-29s?

MR. MILTON: B-29s.

MRS. CLOWER: Still the plane of choice.

MR. MILTON: Navigation was no problem. We had radar and just used radar. The radar would show you land and water. It was real easy.

MRS. CLOWER: You did not have radar before? You were just using the star navigation?

MR. MILTON: Yes. Radar wasn't any good over the ocean, and it would help when you had land and water. It shows up real good on a screen.

MRS. CLOWER: That was a challenge.

MR. MILTON: We had to bomb Japan a few times during the war with radar. When you're in clouds and your bombardier can't see, you use radar to drop your bombs, and I was the expert on radar.

MRS. CLOWER: So you would say you would give the

command to drop the bomb at the right time?

MR. MILTON: Uh-huh.

MRS. CLOWER: And this was, what'd we say, 15 missions?

MRS. MILTON: Twenty-two --

MRS. CLOWER: Three fire bombs and 22 weather.

MR. MILTON: The weather mission we carried a bomb, a 500-pound bomb, and we would drop it anywhere we wanted to. So I would say I bombed Japan 23 regular times, 2 weather missions, makes 25. So I bombed Japan 25 times.

MRS. CLOWER: I'm sure that they remember you, too.

Did you receive any kind of recognitions or medals?

MR. MILTON: Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Metal, and something else. I forget what it is.

MRS. MILTON: Asiatic Pacific Theater Ribbon, Eastern Mandated Island Campaign was Bronze Star.

Air Metal with two oak leaf clusters. Distinguished Flying Cross, and Air Offense against Japan with Bronze Star, and then the Victory Metal for anyone who fought in the war until it was over.

Distinguished Flying Cross they got from flying a low-level fire bomb mission to Tokyo.

MRS. CLOWER: That's very impressive. I'm glad you were decorated.

MR. MILTON: Yeah. My scariest time, I can tell you,

was -- I told you we discovered the jetstream. Well, there was a big, big plan to bomb, fire bomb Tokyo. We were amongst the last ones, maybe, you know, three or four or five or 600 planes. And we came -- we were coming in last. Tokyo was afire. We came in and dropped our bombs, oh, oh, oh, and all of a sudden we hit this flame. All of a sudden we were going up, up, up, up, up, up.

So we finally had our radar on, but for some reason they quit working, and our pilot gave me -- asked me for direction home, and I gave him what, based on when we flew up, what I had. So I gave that to him. And it was cloudy. This was the daytime, late, midafternoon, I guess you'd say.

And when we got out of that smoke we were in the clouds. And I said to him -- I gave him direction home. And I said, "Will you try to climb out of these clouds so I can take a fix on the sun and the moon?" My book showed me the moon would be available, visible. So we climbed and climbed, and I got up in the -- where I could see my bubble, keep going up, keep going up.

Finally we broke out, and I took a fix on the sun and a fix on the moon. Got back down to my desk, figured it out, couldn't believe it. So I told

him what I found and new directions to get home.

And, oh, my god, we were way over. I said, "Let me go check again." So I got up there and doubled up, came back down and says, "That's correct." He said, "We don't have enough gas to get home." I said, "Well, let me give you direction to Iwo Jima."

I came back down and we were in the clouds again. So kept going and kept going, and finally time to be there, we still couldn't see the ground, we were in the clouds.

MRS. CLOWER: Oh, dear.

MR. MILTON: I said, "Circle, and keep going down." So we started circling and going down. Finally we broke out, bingo, there was Iwo Jima. I was sweating that one out.

MRS. CLOWER: How many people were on the plane you would normally have?

MR. MILTON: Eleven men.

MRS. CLOWER: Eleven men. You saved yourself and ten others that day. What a story. That's remarkable.

MR. MILTON: That was my scariest one.

MRS. CLOWER: Well, I would think so.

MR. MILTON: Trouble is, we wouldn't have made it if it hadn't have been for Iwo Jima. We didn't have enough gasoline to get home.

MRS. CLOWER: But you also had to find Iwo Jima in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. That's a pretty good trick right there.

Did you ever have a plane crash or any fatalities with you -- with flying?

MR. MILTON: We saw planes that had run out of gas and ditched. It became a real debate among pilots how to ditch without tearing your plane apart. I never learned how to do it.

MRS. CLOWER: You didn't have to.

What about dog fights when the other -- when the planes would fight in midair, did you have any of those experiences with other planes fighting in the air shooting at you?

MRS. MILTON: They encountered a lot of flak, but you never had to be involved in a dog fight with two planes, did you, with planes shooting at you?

MR. MILTON: Oh, oh, fire planes, always.

MRS. CLOWER: Yeah.

MR. MILTON: We were always met with fire planes, yeah.

MRS. CLOWER: Oh, okay.

MRS. MILTON: Friendly?

MR. MILTON: We had to shoot them down. We had gunners. The B-29 had -- I sat -- see, we had a bombardier sitting here, pilot and copilot here, flight engineer

here, navigator here, and there's a big gun turret right there, and the radio operator here. And then back here another gun turret.

And we had a gunner here, a gunner here, a gunner here, and the bombardier here. And we had about five guys who could shoot at the fighter pilots. We shot some down, but we nearly always had patches needed on our plane.

MRS. CLOWER: So you did take some fire, then?

MR. MILTON: Oh, absolutely.

MRS. CLOWER: But not enough to make you go down. That's good.

MR. MILTON: The plane would keep going if you're four inches. You wouldn't get problems. The air resistance would make you use more gasoline, but the holes in your plane didn't make you fall. I guess the worst place to get hit is in the front plane where your pilot is sitting, copilot and flight engineer. He's your controller of the gasoline.

MRS. CLOWER: Oh, yeah.

MR. MILTON: The bombardier uses his sites, so he would control these guns here. So we could shoot them down.

But the worst part I can tell you about is the flight coming up. I could watch out of my window and the flight engineer could watch out of his window,

and the gunners all, and they would tell us what's it's like with the bombs bursting. They would shoot up, bam, bam, bam, coming right at you.

MRS. CLOWER: And you were in the plane. Could you feel that pressure?

MR. MILTON: We were under orders: No evasive action.

MRS. CLOWER: Oh, dear.

MR. MILTON: If you're on the bomb run, no evasive action. So we just had to pray that they don't get you before you get through it, because you start doing that and the bombardier can't hit the target with the bombs.

MRS. CLOWER: Oh, my gosh.

MR. MILTON: So the worst one I can recall, I'm sitting right here, here is the pilot, and over here the boys are hollering, saying, "Flak, flak, flak, flak," and all of a sudden -- we were on a bomb run, no evasive action, and all of a sudden our plane goes like this and --

MRS. CLOWER: Up and over to the side?

MR. MILTON: All of a sudden she jumps up and the flak goes.

MRS. CLOWER: And misses you.

MR. MILTON: The pilot says to the copilot, "Carl, that was some evasive action you took. You saved our lives." He said, "Sandy, I didn't touch those controls."

MRS. CLOWER: Because the order was no evasive action.

MR. MILTON: Navigator to pilot, "That was my mother's angel doing that to our plane."

MRS. CLOWER: That's wonderful, that's wonderful. No evasive action. That was awfully close, I'm sure.

So when the flak was coming up and you were flying through it, right, trying not to get hit, did you get the pressure from the blast coming up?

MR. MILTON: We would lose pressurization. If we were very high, we had to put our oxygen mask on because we would lose pressure in that plane. But if you get hit that much, you can come back down so you don't have pressurization necessary. Oxygen is required.

MRS. CLOWER: Were you ever afraid?

MR. MILTON: Twenty-three times.

MRS. CLOWER: Every time you flew. I would think so.

How did you communicate with your family back home?

MR. MILTON: I wrote a letter, I think, about everything, every mission. We've been searching for them. My sister says she gave them to us; we can't find them. But I wrote them faithfully.

MRS. CLOWER: That was to your mom and dad?

MR. MILTON: Uh-huh.

MRS. CLOWER: Yeah. Do you still fly today? Do you like to go in the airplanes?

MR. MILTON: The last plane I flew on was the Honor Flight.

MRS. CLOWER: Oh, good, good. I'm glad you did that. Did you enjoy it?

MRS. CLOWER: Yes. I'm glad that you had that opportunity.

MR. MILTON: Yes, my son was my guardian. He went with me.

MRS. CLOWER: Well, what was that experience like? What was it like to go to Washington and experience that?

MR. MILTON: We spent quite a bit of time traveling on bus, then we'd stop and get out and go through one of the memorials.

The one I enjoyed the most was the one, Iwo Jima Flag Raiser, because I saw that little mountain that they were on top of, Mount Suribachi, raising that flag. That's a monument in Washington, D.C., and I saw that flag raising up there many times, five times.

MRS. CLOWER: And you've already explained that at one point landing on Iwo Jima was a lifesaver. So, yes, I would agree, that probably was the monument.

There's a lot of new monuments now for WWII.

Have you been to New Orleans? Did you go to the museum in New Orleans?

MRS. MILTON: Do you remember the museum in New Orleans for WWII?

MR. MILTON: Oh, yeah, we were there.

MRS. MILTON: Before the hurricane.

MR. MILTON: Yeah.

MRS. MILTON: I hope it survived.

MRS. CLOWER: I think it did.

MRS. MILTON: But she wanted to know your experience.

He came back from the Honor Flight just overwhelmed. He was just -- he was in tears when I picked him up.

MRS. CLOWER: Well, I think it's taken a while. I think our nation's always been proud of our military, but it's taken a while for us to realize how important World War II was and your service to WWII and the difference it's made.

Are you still active with the veterans organization?

MRS. MILTON: Are you an active veteran with the VA?

MR. MILTON: I quit going to the meetings because I couldn't understand what they're saying.

MRS. CLOWER: Yeah. I've seen some pictures here of the people that you have flown with. And I believe you said that up until a couple years ago you were still meeting with your friends.

MRS. MILTON: They would have reunions. Your flight crew would go to the reunions for the twentieth --

MR. MILTON: The last one we went to was in Memphis --

MRS. MILTON: Oklahoma City.

MR. MILTON: -- and our flight engineer was there, and he is the only one that we still are in contact with. The rest of them are gone.

MRS. MILTON: Then we went to Oklahoma.

MR. MILTON: Yeah, Root (phonetic) was there. He was the only one.

MRS. MILTON: Everyone else is either dead or in a nursing home.

MRS. CLOWER: Well, I think this has been an amazing interview, and I am -- I just am delighted that you have shared this with us.

MR. MILTON: I have one story to tell.

MRS. CLOWER: Oh, please, I was going to say.

MR. MILTON: When we got through Saipan, somebody came over looking for somebody called Wayne Milton. That's my brother, Wayne. So they kept bugging me and bugging me, and I kept asking, Who was this and where are you from. And I finally learned that that name was with the seabees over on the other side of the island.

MRS. CLOWER: Oh, for heaven's sake.

MR. MILTON: One day on Sunday we didn't have anything

to do after church. We had a chapel. We built it ourselves. But I -- I headed across the island. There was a lot of traffic. Finally I found the guy over there that had come over looking for my brother, and it turned out that his wife had been secretary at the school where I graduated from high school, Gaston High School, and I found him.

So as an officer, I was entitled to three bottles of whiskey a month. So every month I would go over to the Officer's Club to collect my three bottles of whiskey. And I put one bottle up on the shelf with my name on it, and my friends could come and drink. And I'd take one bottle and give it to the enlisted men who had -- who lived in a barracks, different from the officers. And then I would take that third bottle and hitchhike across to the seabees, and they would all get together and we would have a Sunday afternoon get-together with my whiskey.

MRS. CLOWER: Did you find your brother? Was your brother there, or, no, just the people that knew him?

MR. MILTON: My brother was a paratrooper and served in the Philippines. I never did tell him about that. He's gone now.

MRS. CLOWER: So was that all in your family, just the two boys, you and your brother?

MR. MILTON: Neal went in the service after the war. My older brother, two years older than me, was a paratrooper, and then I was in the Air Force.

MRS. CLOWER: Goodness. You had another -- then a third child.

MRS. MILTON: You have two sisters.

MRS. CLOWER: And two sisters

MR. MILTON: I have two sisters. They're younger.

MRS. CLOWER: I'm sure your mother and father were very worried if they had two boys in the service. That's a big sacrifice to make.

Anything else that you'd like to share with us that you would like to have recorded for our project?

MRS. MILTON: I love the story of when they landed stateside from Saipan. They were through firebombing Japan. They declared peace, or surrendered, and he lands -- they were all going to go to the Top of the Mark in San Francisco, and they were going to have a drink to toast the fact they did all these, what, 25 missions safely, and that you get there and you can't get in. He wasn't old enough.

MR. MILTON: Go to the Top of the Mark. We rode the elevator up. They were carding everybody. I couldn't get in. I wasn't 21.

MRS. CLOWER: After all that.

MRS. MILTON: So one of his buddies inside slipped him an I.D. so he could get in with them.

MRS. CLOWER: I would think that you earned that right, certainly. That's a good story, too.

So when you came home, you came home at what base? When you were all through with the service, where were you at that point?

MR. MILTON: That was San Francisco. I could either get out or stay in, and I said I'm going to stay in because I don't want to get in that group of boys going back. I'll wait a year. So I chose 30-day leave, and I'd ride the train or bus, whatever, home. Get a telegram at the end of about two weeks extending my leave of absence 30 more days.

MRS. CLOWER: Oh, that's good. That's good.

MR. MILTON: So I go by a car and drive to San Francisco, I believe it was -- Los Angeles. Anyway, I was driving through California to report in. Nothing to do.

So I joined the country club, bought me a set of golf clubs, getting ready to go play golf. And drive in, take my keys out, go inside. "Earl, Earl, where have you been"? I've just been out and around". Pack your bags, they're waiting on you right now. They

have a bus to take you out to the airport."

"What?"

So I run and pack my bags, didn't have time to go back to the golf course and get my clubs. They put me in a bus to take me out to the airport, get on a plane.

Nobody tells me where I'm going or anything. My sole possessions are with me.

We land at Roswell, New Mexico. They check me in, put me in the barracks. Then after breakfast, Come over to so and so place, we're all meeting.

So I go over there the next day. This is the start of the beginning Atom Bomb test. We're going to have training and -- training and picking the best crews to participate. Anybody that doesn't want to get involved, come over to the office and tell us why.

So I said, what can I do? So I stay. More got involved. Then I write a letter back to my friends in California that says, You can have the golf clubs, here's the key, here's the key to my car, sell it and send me the money. And I stayed there and participated in the Atom Bomb test.

MRS. CLOWER: And you know the results of that. Obviously you've changed history, and you were a part of

it. It was a wonderful, wonderful thing you did.

When did you become inactive in the service?

MRS. MILTON: When did you get out?

MR. MILTON: Oh, after the Atom Bomb test was the 30 days in Germany, 30 days in Japan, then they sent me to Fort Worth. And I was playing golf every day doing nothing, and they all of a sudden says, "Pack your bags, everyone in the car, we'll pay for your gasoline, you're going to Spokane, Washington."

So we moved to Spokane. And then we were just fooling around, reporting in every day, nothing to do, meeting every now and then.

One day, a big thing: Everybody come over to the movie house, Washington, D.C. is here to talk to us.

So we all show up. The essence of it was: If we go to a war with Russia, this unit will be based in North Africa. You will be loaded with an atomic bomb. All the gasoline that you can take off with, you will fly and drop that bomb on Russia, and you come back as far as your gasoline will take you, and you can either ditch or bail out.

I said, "I'm getting out."

MRS. CLOWER: Good for you. That would be -- you had

already served your time. That was the end of your service, your active service, right?

MR. MILTON: So I got out. Now, my commanding officer tried to talk me out of it, but I didn't -- I wasn't going to get in another war.

MRS. CLOWER: I was going to say, you've certainly served your country well.

Now, this is your wife sitting here beside me. When did you meet her?

MR. MILTON: I went to the University of Texas, and -- oh, I was going to tell you a story.

I got out and went home. My dad called Sun Oil Company, that he worked for, and says, "I have a son that needs a job this summer, he's going to go to college this winter."

He said, "Okay, tell him to go report to Della, Louisiana." And that's where my brother was with Sun Oil. So I reported over to Della, and went to -- showed up the next morning for work. They had me fill out a bunch of forms, and they said, "Okay, get in that pickup there, we'll give you a job out cutting weeds."

So they drove me up a ways, put a yoyo in my hand, told me to swing it, cut some weeds.

I left there, oh, just a short while, and my brother drove up in a pickup, and he says, "Earl,

when were you a captain?" And I said, "Well, when I got out, the President appointed me a captain in the reserves." He said, "Get in the truck, they don't want a captain out cutting weeds."

MRS. CLOWER: Oh, that was --

MR. MILTON: So he said, "We're going to use you to look after oil leases while they go on vacation. Your brother will train you how to do that."

So I worked there that summer. That fall I went to the University of Texas and spent, oh, one semester, I guess it was, there, and answered an ad in the paper. And ended up, the guy wanted to hire me, and went on the road doing work for him with vending machines.

And then I -- and then I decided to do the vending machines myself. And I wanted to look for a city that had bars that would -- people would buy the pistachio nut. And Austin, Texas, didn't have bars. But I found out Shreveport, Louisiana, had a bunch of bars.

So I transferred over from college to Shreveport, Louisiana, and put out my pistachio nut machines, and I stayed there until I graduated.

And then my professor says, "You do such good work, I would like to see you go for a graduate

position." And I got an offer from a college over in Alabama.

And I talked with him a while, and I said, "I want to study investments, the stock market, and I'd rather go to New York where the New York Stock Exchange is."

So he said, "I'm sorry, I can't help you on that." So I thanked him and turned in my resignation there at the bank I was working at, moved to New York, enrolled in New York University School of Business, went over to the department that would help you find a job, and they sent me over to a place called Ronald Dee Dee & Company, Investment Counselors. They hired me.

MRS. CLOWER: Good.

MR. MILTON: So I went to night school, working day. One day a friend says, "There's a bunch of girls up here from the South, and they need an escort to go with them over to Brooklyn to swim, would you escort them over?"

Sure. Okay. They're uptown New York, Columbia University area. They're going to get on the subway, come back down, you meet them here, and y'all go over to Brooklyn to the swimming pool.

So when they came down; she was in the crowd.

MRS. MILTON: He loves to say we met in the subway of

New York.

MRS. CLOWER: Tell me your name.

MRS. MILTON: Betty Milton. I had finished graduate school at LSU as a librarian, and I was working in the Brooklyn Public Library, and all of the Southerners stuck together. We were all scare to death, so...

MRS. CLOWER: And you met this handsome man.

MRS. MILTON: We were just good friends. We stayed good friends, and my mother --

MRS. CLOWER: What year was that?

MRS. MILTON: My mother finally figured out they're more than friends, they just haven't figured it out yet.

MRS. CLOWER: That's cute. Well, you are both a delightful couple, and I really, truly appreciate you sharing with us these wonderful stories.

Is there anything else that you'd like to add to this? This is a wonderful, wonderful history.

MR. MILTON: Well, I'll tell you, if it wasn't for her, I wouldn't be able to talk to most people. I can understand her. Most people's voices I can't understand.

MRS. MILTON: We found all the B-29 crews are extremely hard of hearing.

MRS. CLOWER: Because of the noise --

MRS. MILTON: The noise.

MRS. CLOWER: -- of the plane.

MR. MILTON: Yeah. We -- the B-29 had four big engines, and before we would get in the plane to go, we would pull the propellers through to get the oil circulating, and --

MRS. MILTON: They did a walk-through of the four propellers.

MR. MILTON: So two of us -- one would pull, two more would grab one and pull, two more would grab another one and pull that thing. And then they would crank, start the engine, boom, boom, boom, boom. Then we moved to this one and do the same thing.

MRS. CLOWER: Oh, wow.

MR. MILTON: Then we would go to one, another one.

MRS. CLOWER: I can imagine what they did for your hearing.

MR. MILTON: I think that --

MRS. CLOWER: Well, I would like to say I'm glad you didn't have radiation poisoning going through those clouds of radiation. I'm pleased that you're not affected by that. That must have been an experience.

MRS. MILTON: She's glad you didn't get poisoned by the radiation of the cloud over Nakini.

MRS. CLOWER: You seem like a very, very able man, and your remembrances have been wonderful. They're just

exactly what we were looking for, someone that could tell us what it was like while you were there, and make it come to life for us. So thank you so much.

MRS. MILTON: Well, thank you to the Court Reporting Institute of Dallas.

(Interview concluded)