

Interview with Mr. McMullan:

Feb 23, 2017 via telephone

Born in 1925.

Took an examination and I qualified for the Aviation cadet program. Took me into the Army Air Corps. Since I was only 17 years old, they gave me a six-month deferment to finish high school and turn 18. The reason I went in was because the war was on and that was thing everyone was doing, was getting involved.

Q: What motivated you to join the Flying Tigers?

When I became eligible for the Aviation Cadet program, it wasn't that I was planning to go to China and be part of the Flying Tigers. My motivation was that

I didn't do what I was hoping I could do was to go into the Aviation program and become a pilot like my brother. When I was finally called in after six months, they sent me to basic training rather than to flight school so I wound up becoming assigned to aerial gunner school. After my gunnery school, I was formed into a 10-man flight crew into heavy bombers, but we still didn't know anything about China. The reason I got to China is because when we finally received our orders to report for an overseas assignment, we all boarded an army plane and when we were about an hour out of the ocean overseas, our pilot opened our sea of orders and we found that we were going to General Chennault's 14th AF Flying Tigers. So, it wasn't something that was my desire when I went into service to do that. You didn't have too much choice of where you were going. You were pretty much going where you were assigned. My motivation after I found out what we were doing there was we were very excited because we were going to a country so foreign as China was exciting and we had heard about the original AVG Flying Tigers and that was also very exciting for us.

Q: What was your role in Flying tigers?

I was the aerial nose gunner assistant engineer on B24 bomber. We were sent to Kunming China in 308 bomb group. My assignment was the nose gunner assistant engineer in the B24 bomber.

Q: How did you feel in the B24 bomber when you took off?

Well, I'll tell you, taking off was always an exciting event. We were stationed in Kunming, in western China because the Japanese had taken over the eastern seaports in China. When we would fly our bombing missions, we would start in western China and fly for several hours to get to our bomb target. So, taking off was pretty much exciting because a lot of action happened on takeoff and then there would be a period of boredom, just flying alone. Then near the target, our heart started beating and it was many minutes of everything from excitement to panic. Then on our way home your heart

started to slow down a bit. But even after you finished your bombing mission in China, because of the distance, we probably lost as many planes due to weather and lack of fuel as we did from enemy action. It was from the beginning to end, it went from boredom to panic to getting back to normal again.

Q: Was there ever a time when you were forced to fire your gun at a Japanese plane?

No, by the time I got there, I was young. I didn't get to China until almost Xmas 1944 and by that time our planes had pretty much dominated the air over China planes and we were starting to bomb the Chinese homeland and so the Japanese had called most of the airplanes back to protect the homeland. So, when we were flying we seldom had any dogfights because most of the Japanese fighters had been called back to their homeland. I think there was only one time I was firing at an enemy aircraft. Our biggest problem was the drain we had to fly over, over the Himalayan mountains, they called "The Hump". The weather brought down planes practically every day. The thing we had to really contend with was the ground fighter the anti-aircraft fighter over every target and the extreme weather conditions and getting back home with enough gas. One time it was a pretty close call we were all we were running out of gas and we were all given the orders to stand by to bail out and finally our radio operator made a contact with a base that we were able to land on and before we got into the runway two of our engines had cut out. So rather than the enemy fighter planes, the extreme weather and anti-aircraft fighters were what we were really concerned with.

Q: What areas did you bomb?

We were going from Kunming China to the eastern side. Some of our bombing targets were the naval yards in Kowloon, Hong Kong, railroad marshalling yards where their trains were loaded, and factories and military installations in eastern China.

Q: How did the Chinese receive you?

The Chinese people, because of the language, you know it wasn't like in Europe where it was common to find fellows who could speak French or German, or Italian—our communication with the Chinese people was mostly friendly handshakes. The Chinese people were friendly.

Q: What is your favorite story about being a Flying Tiger?

Well you know I was asked one time to write a story about that. It's really difficult after 70 years. The raids and missions we went on they all just kind of seem to blend together. But there are some—there was one—this was the one where we had to stand by to possibly bail out. We had some minor problems on taking off and we had to pull aside until we found out what the problem was. They determined it was nothing severe so we had to rejoin the rest of our group. However we had to pull so much power to get caught up with the other planes on the bombing raid. I believe that was also the raid where our first target was socked in with the weather. So we had to go to an alternate. At any rate we had used so much gas because of our delay that by the time we should

have been home it was dark and we were running out of gas and we thought we were going to bail out. Another time that comes to memory—we were bombing a railroad marshalling yard and my position as the nose gunner right up front—I could see everything. This train was chugging out of the railroad marshalling yards trying to pick speed to keep ahead of the bombs but they didn't make it. What we had found when we got back to our base, we can't say whether it was my plane or the one beside us-but it turns out what we had bombed was a munitions train that blew up and caused enough damage that the Japanese were not only denied the supplies in the train it also caused such damage that we knew they couldn't use those tracks or those marshalling yards for some time. That was a very successful raid. You know it was just like in a movie-you're going along and there was this train and you're firing your guns because there was the enemy on the ground. We were going along at about 100 mph and the train was going at about 30 mph. When we got back we had a debriefing and the plane behind us said you guys up front said you got that munitions train and you blew the heck out of the marshalling yards. That's one mission that I remember quite well.

Q: How did you get along with your bomber crew?

We were really friendly. You know there are 10 men on a heavy bombing crew. We nicknamed our plane the "Dragon Lady" which is a cartoon about pilots fighting with the Flying Tigers. I forgot what the question was. We had fellas-there were 10 of us and the only two that were from the same state were myself and the pilot-he was from Fresno or San Jose. We had guys from Texas, Colorado, Wisconsin, Oklahoma, all over the country. We got along very well. Of course the Officers and the Enlisted men didn't fraternize too much. We were together on the plane and we did some socializing and would go to the mountains—but mainly the enlisted men-we were a group of 6. The people we were closest to and associated with the most in China was our own crew.