

**NASA JOHNSON SPACE CENTER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
EDITED ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT**

JOHN B. LEE
INTERVIEWED BY JENNIFER ROSS-NAZZAL
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ROSS-NAZZAL: Today is January 15th, 2008. This oral history with John Lee is being conducted for the Johnson Space Center Oral History Project in Houston, Texas. The interviewer is Jennifer Ross-Nazzal assisted by Sandra Johnson. Thanks again for having us in your home this morning.

LEE: You're very welcome.

ROSS-NAZZAL: We appreciate it. I'd like to begin by asking you about your interest in aviation and engineering as a child.

LEE: Well, it goes back to the fact that I grew up on farms in Virginia and Texas during the Depression. We were a family of five children: two sisters [Beth, the oldest child, and Francis] and three brothers [Keith, my fraternal twin, myself, and Harry, the youngest child]. Most of the time my paternal grandfather and grandmother lived with us. I was named after him, John Bennett Lee. The name had been handed down for generations. When we sat down at the table to eat, there were nine of us.

My grandfather and father had a dairy farm, raised apples and peaches, and also had beehives. It was named "Judyville," and it was a real show place. In the early 1930s, they sold the farm to John Lee Pratt, so we moved down to the Rio Grande Valley in Harlingen, Texas,

where they had just started irrigating from the Rio Grande River. There they planted citrus trees for oranges and grapefruits. They planted vegetables between the tree rows which they would sell at a market. So while they were watering the trees, they were also watering the vegetables. Daddy and my grandfather had two different farms. After four years, the trees were just beginning to bear fruit.

Then the Depression hit. Daddy went to the bank to borrow money to buy seeds to plant—as he had done every year. The bank told him that they did not have the money to loan him that year. He asked, “Why can’t you loan me the money? Haven’t I paid you back every year?” They answered, “Yes you have.” My father then said, “Well, you’re loaning money to a farmer down the road from me.” The bank replied, “Yes, but he hasn’t paid us back yet, so we have got to keep loaning him money in hopes that we can get our money back from him.” Daddy always believed in paying his bills. They closed down their business, sold the orchards, and moved back to Virginia. What happened was that the people who stayed became millionaires raising citrus fruit and vegetables. We didn’t.

When we got back to Virginia, my father took a job with the government for a while. I believe it was the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps]. Then my grandfather and he became tenant farmers, and it seemed like we were moving every year. I went to six different schools my first seven years of grammar school. We were moving all the time.

John Lee Pratt had bought a farm south of Fredericksburg, Virginia, on Route 3 in King George County that was on the Rappahannock River. It was named “Farlyvale.” It had been run down. He knew that Daddy and Granddaddy were good farmers, so he leased it to them. He had become vice-president of General Motors. He was a dollar-a-year man for the United States government during World War II; that is he was a consultant for the government, and they paid

him one dollar a year. He was once offered the presidency of General Motors, but he turned it down. That's how good he was. He had grown up on a farm in the area and had become an engineer. He was my idol.

In Texas, I started school when I was six years old. When I was twelve years old and in the seventh grade, it was the first time that we had ever lived in a house that had indoor plumbing. We stayed there until after I graduated from high school.

This farm had about 1,000 acres. Six hundred acres of it was upland where we raised horses, cattle, pigs, corn, wheat, hay, and we had a vegetable garden. The fields were covered with sassafras bushes. Mr. Pratt bought a Caterpillar tractor so that we were able to clear the fields. I learned to drive horses and mules with plows, wagons and cultivators, also cars, trucks, tractors, as well as the Caterpillar tractor. I was too young to have a driver's license, but I did not drive on the highway.

This farm also had about 400 acres of marshland. Down along the side of that marshland was a strip of land that was about 15 acres where we raised corn. When I was down there cultivating those rows of corn behind a horse and mule, I would stop them at the end of the corn rows to let them breathe while they were sweating and brushing off the mayflies that were all over them. The Dahlgren Naval Proving Ground at Dahlgren, Virginia, was very close to us. I would sit there on the cultivator and watch the Marines dogfight in the Navy's SNJ's [also the Army Air Corps AT-6, built by North American], which was the advanced trainer. I said, "I'm going to do that one of these days." I had no idea how I was going to get there. That was my dream from the beginning.

I graduated from King George High School when I was seventeen years old. It was a non-accredited high school. At that time, we had four years of high school. I knew that I wanted

to go to VPI [Virginia Polytechnic Institute] at Blacksburg, Virginia, to study engineering so I had to take trigonometry in summer school. I had worked some extra jobs during the summer, and whatever I made, Mr. Pratt matched it. Two weeks before VPI was to open in the fall, my father came into my bedroom one night and said, "John, I think we have made enough money on the wheat crop this year so that I can send you to your first year of college." That was how close it came for me to not being able to go to college. He got in touch with Benton Gale who was superintendent of schools. He sent a letter of recommendation to VPI for me. Two weeks later in 1941, I was in college. Can you believe that happening today?

ROSS-NAZZAL: Not today.



LEE: I joined the Infantry in the Cadet Corps, and I studied to be a mechanical engineer. When people ask me why I decided to be an engineer, my answer always is, "I did not want to look at the south end of a mule going north for the rest of my life." That was one of my grandfather's sayings. I dearly loved that man. He was a Christian that read the Bible all the time. I knew there had to be something better in life.

Freshmen at VPI were known as "Rats." Freshmen were not allowed to have radios in their room, but the upperclassmen did. Then on Sunday, December 7, 1941, an upper classman came bursting into my room at about 4:00 pm and said that the Japanese had just bombed Pearl Harbor. I didn't know where Pearl Harbor was or what it was.

My twin brother, Keith, was also at VPI with me. When we became 18 the following summer, we both tried to get into the Naval and the Army Air Corps. We were both turned down because we each had a deviated septum in our noses. That is one side of the nose obstructed. I don't know how I got mine, but I know how Keith got his. One day he was catching a baseball behind the batter without a mask, and a ball hit him in the nose. Keith claimed he broke my nose, and I said, "No, you did not!" Back when we were in Texas and we were about seven or eight years old, my father had given us boxing gloves, and he taught us how to box.

We weren't able to get into the Air Corps. Since the war had broken out the year before, VPI had put us on an accelerated program, and I went to college during the summer. In December, I finished my sophomore year. On December 1, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt came out with an edict stating that a person had 15 days to join whatever service he may want, but after that, he would be put into the service where we want him. Being in the Cadet Corps, we couldn't go off of campus without permission.

One of the things that happened to me at VPI was when we were sent on a field trip. A plane flew over us, and they dropped sacks of flour on us, which were simulated bombs. We were lying on the ground firing blanks back at them with our rifles. Once again, I knew that I didn't want to be on the ground in the infantry. I wanted to be the one in the airplane dropping the bombs. Those were some of the things that really helped me to decide exactly what I wanted to do.

VPI was at least six hours away from home. Blacksburg, Virginia, is in the western part of the state, with an elevation around 2,000 feet and cold as hell during the winter, the high winds blowing with snow, and the sleet on the ground. We would have to stand in formation at

seven o'clock in the morning before going to breakfast in the cafeteria. One morning it was below zero with snow and sleet on the ground. The wind was blowing from the North across that drill field into our faces. There was "A" company, "B" company, "C" company, and the band in formation. The adjutant called, "Report!" The companies saluted and said:

"A' company all present and accounted for, sir!"

"B' company all present and accounted for, sir!"

"C' company all present and accounted for, sir!"

The band said, "What the hell are we standing here for?!" Everybody just broke up laughing.

At that time we had three choices: 1) Daddy could get us a deferment to work on the farm; 2) we could stay in college and get a commission in two more years in the infantry, which I definitely did not want; or 3) we could go AWOL [absent without leave] and get our noses operated on to get in the Air Corps. So we went AWOL from the Cadet Corps. We went home so that we could get our noses operated on in order to be able to join the Air Corps. My twin brother and I hitchhiked home. We could hitchhike in those days.

We got all the way to Fredericksburg, Virginia. We lived about twelve miles south of there on Route 3. We walked across the Rappahannock River Bridge in Fredericksburg at midnight, but there were no cars coming. So we had to go back into town and rent a cab to take us to the farm. Route 3 went by [George] Washington's boyhood home, where he had *not* chopped down the cherry tree and he had thrown a "silver dollar" across the Rappahannock River, not the Potomac River. It is a very famous part of Virginia.

So anyway, when we got home and we started going up the steps to our bedroom—those steps would go creak, creak, and creak, so we couldn't be very quiet—there was Daddy standing

at the top of the steps. He asked in a deep voice, "What are you boys doing here?" We told him that we had come home to get our noses operated on. "We want to get in the Air Corps." Daddy said, "I can get you deferments and keep you here on the farm." He had already gotten deferments for two boys, Ben and James, who he had working for him that we had gone to school with. We told him "No, we don't want to do that. We want to get in the Air Corps." We told him that Ben and James could help him more on the farm and that we could do more good in the war as pilots.

Daddy understood because on the first day that World War I had broken out, he had signed up in the cavalry. Daddy was 21 years old. He was a great horseman. He could run and jump on the back of a running horse. He was in France delivering ammunition to the front when the war ended. He survived the flu epidemic that killed so many American soldiers. When a doctor visited him one day, he told my father that he would do what he could for him. He told the doctor, "You think I am going to die but I am not." So he understood.

He took us down to the University of Virginia's Hospital in Richmond, Virginia. Our mother's cousin, Bick Caldwell, was the chief of staff of that hospital so he got us into the hospital right away. He assigned a doctor to us who was one of the best nose specialists around. We both went through our operations. What they did was give us local anesthetic, and we had to sit up in a chair. The doctor used a hammer and a chisel and kept chipping on the inside of my nose. It felt like he was knocking off the back of my head. I said that I would never go through that again. Keith and I left the hospital on the 15th of December with our noses still swollen and bandaged up. Keith went down to Norfolk, Virginia, and joined the Naval Air Corps, and I went to Roanoke, Virginia, and joined the Army Air Corps. I didn't want any part of landing on an aircraft carrier, but Keith liked it.

I took after my father's side of the family, and he took after my mother's side of the family; that is why we were named after our respective grandfathers. When people ask me, "Are you identical twins?" I tell them, "No, we are fraternal twins." Believe it or not, I had red hair, a freckled face, and sunburned easily. He was shorter than me with black hair, brown eyes, suntanned, was very good looking, and he got all of the girls. That is why I had to leave home. I couldn't stand the competition. I played sports. He chased girls, and the girls chased him. I can tell you an anecdote that proves my point but I won't do that now.

When we went back to see the doctor, Keith's nose was all right. When the doctor looked at mine, he said, "Oh no, I didn't get it all; I've got to do it again." Whenever you have a dream and you set a goal and you want it bad enough, you'll do whatever it takes. I wanted to be a pilot, so that is what I had to do. I went through the operation a second time. I told the doctor that this time I didn't want to sit up. He said okay. They laid me down, and he redid the operation. He did not explain to me that they performed the operation sitting up so that the blood would flow out of my nose. By lying down I was swallowing the blood. When I woke up after the operation, mother was sitting there beside the bed. I don't know if I should tell this story or not. All of a sudden I got very sick of the stomach, and I upchucked blood all over her dress. That was a horrible mess. I felt so sorry for mother. She was an angel on this Earth. I was then able to stay in the Air Corps and go through my training and so forth. That's how I got into the Air Corps, but it wasn't easy.

ROSS-NAZZAL: It doesn't sound easy at all.

LEE: When you want something bad enough you'll do whatever it takes. I've always believed in that.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You ended up coming back out to Texas for training. Will you tell us about that?

LEE: Yes, that is an interesting part of it. The Air Force would send the new recruits to another part of the country from where their home was. On February 28, 1943, Daddy took me and Billy Potts to the train in Richmond, Virginia. Billy had graduated from high school with me, and we both had signed up in the Air Corps at the same time. We boarded the train in Richmond and were sent to Miami, Florida, for a month of basic training. We would march on some beautiful golf courses. We were billeted in a hotel. The Air Corps' Headquarters was in the beautiful Cadillac Hotel. Then after that I was sent to a college training detachment [CTD] at the Butler University field house in Indianapolis, Indiana. We were put in their field house that was used for sports. At that time it was the biggest field house in the U.S. The Navy was already there. The Navy was put in one half of it, and we were put in the other half at the other end of the basketball court. They were training to send messages by semaphores.

When I got in the service, my training in the Cadet Corps at VPI really paid off. At CTD, I was pulled out of the ranks and became a flight commander. I was teaching the other guys how to march instead of having to learn. While there, one Sunday I went to church. I was invited by a very nice family to their home for lunch. They had a very pretty daughter who could play the piano very well. Before I left there, I had fallen in love with her. We ended up corresponding during the war. In combat, I named my airplane "Suzanne" after her.

I stayed in Indiana for three months and then we were sent to San Antonio, Texas, to preflight school, which had the reputation as one of the toughest in the services in World War II. Once again, I was pulled out of the ranks and became a drill instructor. That also gave me certain privileges, such as a private room and I could sleep later. The other guys in the barracks didn't like that very much so I got harassed a few times, pulled out of bed and so forth, but that was all part of the job.

When we were at preflight school, they asked us to list in order whether we would rather be a pilot, a navigator, or bombardier. I put down pilot, navigator, then bombardier in that order. My goal was always to be a pilot. Sure enough, I got assigned as a pilot. I was sent out west for primary flight training to a little airfield at Fort Stockton, Texas. When we got there, we were told to look at the person on the right and left of us. We were told that only one of us would make it through pilot school. I felt sorry for the other two guys. Our instructors were civilian



instructors, but the Air Corps was in charge of the field and the training.

In primary flight school, we flew the Ryan PT-19 which had a low laminar flow wing. I did not know what that meant but I enjoyed flying it. The wing had been designed by the NACA [National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics] at Langley Field, Virginia. The airplane had fixed landing gears, an open cockpit with a needle, ball, airspeed, and a horizontal indicator, but no radio. The instructor was in the back seat, and we could communicate with a tube going to each of the pilots' helmets. We had white scarves around our necks, flapping in the breeze. We were hot stuff.

One of the things that they had us do was land without using power and try to land as close to a line across the runway as we could. The pilots were graded on how close they came to the line. I came in without any power and straddled the line on landing. My instructor said that they had never seen anyone do that before.

Over the Christmas holidays, my father came down to see me while I was in Preflight School. He was sitting there on the flight line with some of the pilots watching the planes take off. When I took off, one of the pilots asked, "Who was that who made such a smooth takeoff?" One of the pilots responded, "That was John Lee." The other pilot said, "Well, it's no wonder, if it's John Lee." My father was really proud when he told me that. I must have been recognized by my fellow pilots as a good pilot. I came out of that school with a very high flying rating.

I'm bragging a little bit now, but I loved flying. Here we had our first tragedy. One plane came into the traffic pattern and hit the airplane under him. One of the pilots was killed. Naturally we were all upset about it. The Air Corps captain, who was a West Point graduate, called us in and gave us a pep talk. He explained that in our profession some of us were going to

get killed. We were going to have to get used to it. He was very impressive.



Then we moved on to basic training at Goodfellow Field in San Angelo, Texas, where we trained in the Grumman BT-13. It had a closed cockpit with fixed landing gears, but we had a radio. We learned to fly on instruments, to fly under the hood, to use the beam for cross-country flying, to fly at night, and things like that. At basic training they asked us to list in order if we wanted to be a single-engine, twin-engine, or a multi-engine pilot. By this time I was

getting cocky, so I put down single engine, single engine, and single engine—in that order. I got single engine. Talk about being cocky!



I was then sent to advanced training at Foster Field in Victoria, Texas. Here we trained in the North American AT-6, an advanced trainer. On April 15, 1944, in the class of 44D at the age of



19, I graduated and received my wings as a single-engine pilot. After two weeks of leave, I was sent back to Foster Field and over to Matagorda Island, Texas, for gunnery school. We flew AT-6s there as well as the P-40s for gunnery in ground strafing.



After that, I was shipped to Perry, Florida. That was way out in the country. In fact, the town is not even there anymore. What was there was built because of the airbase. It was that isolated. We trained in the P-40s. This was the airplane that General Chenault used with the Flying Tigers in China. There we had formation flying, dog fighting, strafing, and aerial gunnery. We would shoot at a sleeve behind another airplane and do ground strafing of a wooden target. Ray Larson, my best friend, and I had the highest gunnery scores there. Our instructor had won top gunner in the Air Corps. He showed us how to make a pass at the flying target to be the most effective. The word got around that they were going to keep the two of us as instructors. I said, "I do not want to be an instructor. I want to go overseas to get into combat." It ended up that I was not assigned the job. I don't know how the word got around, but I made it very plain that I didn't want that.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You wanted to fly.

LEE: Yes, my goal was to fly in combat. Flying the P-40 was quite interesting. When you took off, there was this long nose up in front of you and you could not see the runway in front of you. But you could tell if you varied off of a straight line. On takeoff, I felt like I had a “tiger by the tail.” On one landing, I had a blowout of my right tire. I was able to get it off of the runway without cart wheeling or flipping the airplane.

Once on takeoff with the canopy open and my goggles on, oil started covering my face. I immediately cut my power, keeping the plane under control. I lifted my goggles and taxied to the flight line. When I taxied in, some of the ground crew saw me with my face covered with oil and the area around my eyes where my goggles had been, which was white, they started laughing. I did not think that it was so funny. I bet it was comical. I wish they had taken a picture of me. It turned out that when the ground crew had put oil in the plane they had forgotten to put the oil cap back on. I imagine they got in trouble.

We were told not to try to do a loop. One day on a training flight, I got bored. I took the plane up higher, went into a dive to pick up speed, and pulled up into a loop. When I was on my back, I tried to help it through the loop instead of flying through it. My plane went into a snap role and went into an inverted spin. I heard that if you got into an inverted spin in the Bell Airacobra P-39, that a pilot could not get out of it. That flashed through my mind. I cut the engine power and that big heavy nose fell through. The plane went into a very fast spin, higher than anything I had ever trained for. I was able to recover from that. When I looked around to see if anyone had seen me, I saw a plane a ways behind me coming after me. If it was an

instructor, I did not want him to catch me. I already had a high rate of speed so I firewalled it and left him behind me.

When we finished our training at Perry, Florida, we were sent to a staging area at Tallahassee, Florida. It was very nice there. This is a very interesting story. One day before we were going to be shipped out, Ray Larson came running into the barracks and said, "Hey John, John, they have more than enough pilots to be shipped out. They asked for ten pilots to volunteer to stay behind who could go home on leave. I was the tenth one that signed up." I asked him if he saw my name on that list, and he said, "No." "I thought we were going to go overseas together." He said, "But I have a chance to go home." Then a few days later he came running into the barracks again. He said, "John, John, they have some more openings, come on and sign up." I said, "No. I've trained with this group, and I want to go overseas with them. I don't want to do that."

I found out after the war that when he rode the train to his home in Ohio, there was a telegram telling him to return to the base immediately, which he did. He was shipped to the West Coast by train where they were loaded on a tanker and shipped to the South Pacific. On board were their P-40s in crates. They had to take them out of those crates and put them together, with many parts still packed in grease. He was assigned to the "Mahurin Raiders" who were very famous. They lived in tents and were hopping from island to island. When he finished combat he was a nervous wreck. The flight surgeon told him that he would never fly again. I was so grateful that I had not volunteered to stay behind. We were shipped out of New York past the Statue of Liberty by convoy to Liverpool, England.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I wanted to go back and ask you a question. When you were learning to fly, before you actually got in the cockpit, how did you know what to do? How were you trained before that point?

LEE: You had to study a manual of the plane. You had to learn all of the controls and the instruments on the panel. The instructor would go over all of the controls and the gauges with you and explained what they had to do. Then, when you were in the cockpit, they would blindfold you and you had to reach for the controls and point to every gauge on the panel. Of course, the more advanced the airplane, the more controls and gauges that you had. In the beginning, the instructor took the plane off and landed it. He also showed you how to fly certain maneuvers, check the winds, and how to pick out a place to make an emergency landing. It had better be upwind. You had to follow him. After so many flights, like ten or twelve, depending on how far advanced he thought you were, he would get out of the airplane and shock you by saying, "OK, take it up by yourself." You would be elated but scared as hell. In the PT-19, you only had a few instruments.

You always started off in primary, then basic, and on to advanced training with the instructor flying with you and showing you how to fly. Then you would solo. When we got to the P-40, there was just a single seat. You were told what the different gauges were for, and what you had to do with the mixture control, the flaps, pull up the landing, and so forth. You were shown step by step.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I was curious about that, knowing that there probably weren't simulators back then.

LEE: Well, we did have simulators. Where did I run into my first simulators? I don't remember exactly. I think that we did when we started flying under the hood on instruments and flying the beam for cross country. We may have had simulators in both basic and advanced training, but I am not sure. At night, you would fly a beacon, and you had to learn the Morse Code, dit dah dah, dah dit dit dit, dit dah, for the 36 letters of the alphabet. That was one of the things that you had to pass in order to graduate. The first 15 words you had to get exactly right. I went through the Morse Code test and when I got through the first 15 words, I stopped and put my pencil down. That was it. That's all I had to do, and I had them all right. If you didn't pass that, you'd be held over to the next class, and I didn't want that to happen.

Yes, we flew simulators, and what we were doing was learning to fly blind. In flight, with you under the hood, the instructor would have you fly toward the beacon. He might set up the plane off the beacon and to fly away from the beacon. You would have to use the beacon signals to find your way back. You would know by the sound, whether it's getting louder or weaker, whether you were going toward the beacon or away from the beacon and/or what side of it you were on. If it was getting weaker, you knew you had to make a 180 degree turn and go the other way.

They would try tricks on you in aerobatics. One day during aerobatics as I was doing a roll, and when I was on my back, I happened to look up and I saw that the fuel gauge was turned to off. As I rolled out, I turned the fuel gauge back on and just kept right on flying. The instructor said, "Very good, John, very good." If I had not seen it, the engine would have quit on me and I would have been looking for a field to make a forced landing. Of course you always had to be able to pick a field in order to land in case your airplane engine stopped. They pulled

all kind of tricks like that on you. Of course I know they pull a lot more on pilots today than they did in those days, but that was just a single engine and it did not have as many instruments as they do today.

In September of 1944, we were shipped in a convoy on the French cruise ship the *Mauritania* to Liverpool, England. We were then sent to a field at Peterborough, England, to train for a month there in the P-51 Mustang with the Caged Canopy, which was the first version built. There I was taught flying formation and aerobatics. In October of 1944, I was assigned to the 20th Fighter Group [FG] in the Eighth Air Force. Each fighter group consisted of three squadrons, so in the 20th FG there were the 55th, the 77th, and the 79th Fighter Squadron—which I was assigned to. My squadron commander was Jack Ilfrey from Houston, Texas.



He was on his second tour of duty after becoming the first ace in North Africa in P-38s. He is standing left of the propeller. I am on the right wing, hidden behind the man sitting on the propeller with a dog in his lap.

The group had changed from the P-38 to the P-51 in August so I did not get to fly the P-38. The P-51D had the tear drop canopy, and it was the best prop plane ever built. I arrived in England in September of 1944. After a month training in the P-51 at Peterborough, England, I was assigned to the 20th Fighter Group in the 79th Fighter Squadron. I got to the group in October. I flew my first mission on November 9th of 1944. After a few missions, I received a brand new P-51D airplane. To the right is a photo of me returning from a combat mission.



In combat we had to fly high altitude escort missions of bombers, which were at 24,000–25,000 feet. To the left is a photo of me in my flight gear. To the right is a photo of me taxiing



out for takeoff on a mission. We would escort from as high as 30,000 feet. I had never been up that high. Things are much different at those altitudes because you didn't have the atmospheric pressures that you have here on the ground and the drag was less on your



airplane. If you fell behind your leader and tried to catch up, you had to use a lot more power. When you caught up, and you cut back on your power you would glide a lot further. There I was, on the first day, going like a yo-yo. I'd go past my leader and then fall back and then go forward. It was very humiliating.

Now you have it in my report about how the British really bought the P-51 from North American before the Air Force did. They developed the P-51, really. I won't go into those

details here. I don't think it's that necessary. They made that plane what it was. There wasn't a German plane that could touch that airplane.



Before I flew my first combat mission, the group engaged the German fighters several times. Above is the Messerschmitt Me-109 on the left and the Focke Wulf FW 190 on the right. The Germans didn't fly in formation like we did. On one mission the Germans came up in gaggles, some estimated as many as 200-300 airplanes. The group destroyed 28 airplanes and damaged 5 without the loss of a man in aerial combat. While I was there, there were at least 3 missions where our men destroyed 24, 26, and 28 airplanes. While I was there, we didn't lose a man in air-to-air combat with the German airplanes.

At first, all we did was escort bombers. On the left is the Boeing Flying Fortress. On the



right is the Lockheed Liberator. When General "Jimmy" [James H.] Doolittle became the head of the Eighth Air Force, he cut us loose and let us hit "targets of opportunity."



That is, we would go down on the deck and strafe airports,

trains, train marshalling yards, tanks, and anything that moved. That's where we destroyed a lot more airplanes, but we also lost some men to flak. I also had some experiences with some pretty heavy flak installations.

The Germans were ahead of us in many areas of technology. They had developed the first Operational Rocket Airplane—the Messerschmitt Me-163 on the left.



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This plane did not play a very significant part of the war because of its limited range of about 45 minutes. I didn't get to see the rocket airplane. This is the first Operational Jet Fighter Airplane—the Messerschmitt Me-262—on the right. I had several encounters with it.



Wernher von Braun and his staff were on a rock island in the North Sea called Peenemünde. It had one of the heaviest flak insulations in Europe. The flak was so thick that it looked like you could



get out and walk on it. He had developed the V-1 buzz bomb, which was nothing more than a gyroscope guided missile. Its engine sounded like a washing machine motor. I did not see it but I heard it many times flying over at night. If the engine quit, you had better duck, because you knew it was coming down. One of them hit the King's Cross Train Station in London, England, one hour after I had left there going back to my base. On missions over Germany, I saw the V-II Rockets being launched out of Germany on the way to London. They were also developed by

Wernher von Braun. Some twenty years later, I found myself in staff meetings and standing on the Saturn booster rocket test stands at the Marshall Space Flight Center [MSFC] in Huntsville, Alabama, with Wernher von Braun and his staff. I still had mixed emotions.

That is some of the continuity between WWII and some of the things we followed up on in the development of the space program. That is the main purpose for me talking to you about WWII and how it affected me, the USA in the future, and for the NACA that later became NASA.

So let me see where was I? I arrived in England in September of 1944. I was in the Battle of France, the Battle of Ardennes [known as the Battle of the Bulge], and the Battle of Europe. I was there until the end of the war. Now in the Battle of the Bulge, we tried for seven straight days to get down through that weather to support our troops on the ground, but the weather was so bad that we couldn't do it.

A good friend of mine, Colonel Gene Smith, was with the Ninth Air Force. They flew



the Grumman P-47 Thunderbolt (left). They were in tents, and they were moving every so often as the Germans retreated. They kept moving their bases farther and farther forward.

During the Battle of the Bulge, Gene Smith's group commander picked Gene to fly with him, because he was such a good navigator. They took off in the fog and stayed right on the deck. They found the German tanks, which were moving out in the open, under the fog, in the Battle of the Bulge. Gene Smith and his CO [commanding officer] found the tanks, and he said that they got a couple of passes at them. When they got back to the base they reported where they were to General George S. Patton, so when the fog rose, General Patton knew where the German tanks were, out in the open. General Patton gave credit to them; they were one of the reasons we won the Battle of the Bulge.

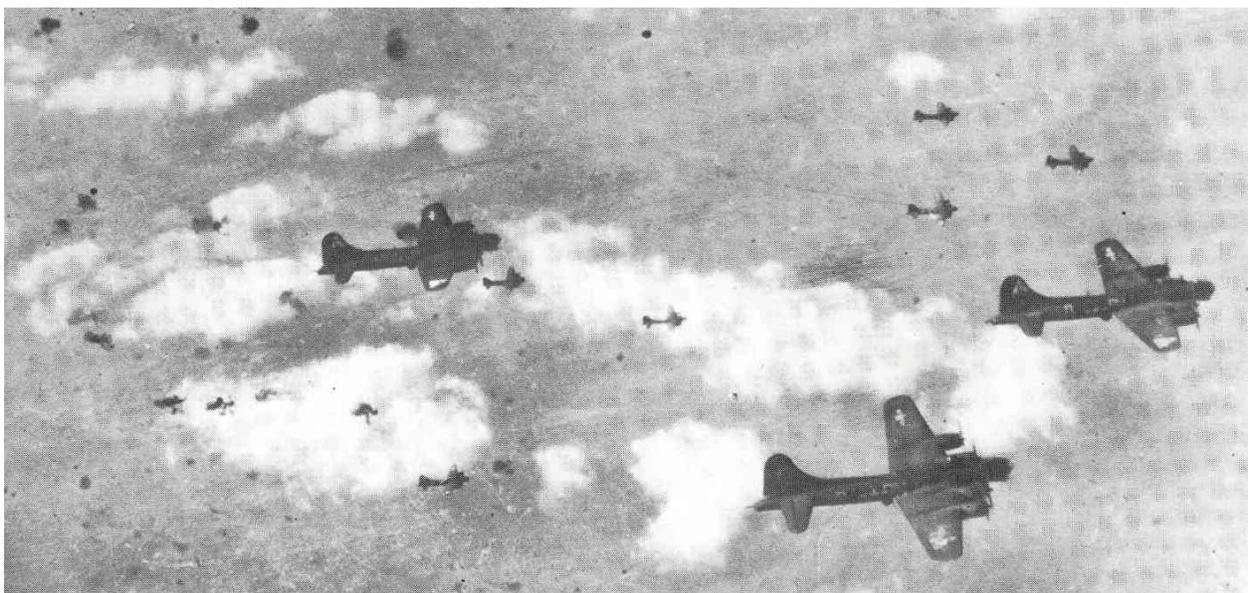
Like I said, for seven days we had tried to get down through the weather at the Battle of the Bulge, and we could not. On Christmas Eve the weather broke. The Ninth Air Force, which had the P-47s, was given the job of supporting the Battle of the Bulge. The P-47 could sustain a lot of hits from flak and bullets from the ground. You could knock a piston out of the P-47 and it could still fly. In the P-51, if you got one bullet hole in the glycol coolant loop that cooled the

engine, you'd lose the airplane. They took over the task of saving the Battle of the Bulge. We, the Eighth Air Force, were sent on high altitude missions escorting bombers over Germany.

The weather was so bad that when we took off and I reached down to pull up my landing gear, it would be the last time that I would see the ground until we landed. When we left our Air Force base in England, the weather had closed in, and we couldn't get back to our home base. We had to land at other U.S. or British Air Force bases on the eastern coast of England. The



group sent our mechanics down to these airfields and they took care of our airplanes at night so that we could fly the next day. This is my crew chief Gerosanti in the middle (nicknamed Geronimo, but I never knew why). The man on the left was his gunner mate.



Above is a photo of the bombers flying through flak over a target. The bases did not have enough beds for everyone. We would cuddle up together on a cement floor, as close to a pot-bellied stove as we could get, trying to keep warm. I was glad to be able to fly the next morning so that I could get warm again. We flew on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year's Eve, and New Year's Day. During the Christmas holidays we were away from our base for three days and four nights. We had to live, eat, and sleep in our same clothes, but that did not compare with what those poor soldiers were going through on the ground, in their frozen fox holes, without proper clothing and shoes, on those cold winter nights. There was no comparison. That was horrible. During that period of time I had flown 13 straight missions. When we got back to the base, we had a great big party.

On New Year's Day, the Germans put up a very large force in hopes of breaking our back. They knew that Americans would have a big party on New Year's Eve, so they figured that they could hit us because our pilots would have a big hangover. A funny story is that one of the pilots in my Squadron named "Shaky" Skinner did have a big hangover. He was named "Shaky" because when we played cards with him, his hands would always shake. We asked him how was he able to pass his physical. He said that he told them, "I have a big hangover from last night," and they passed him! On New Year's Day, he got into the airplane and put on his seat belt and his oxygen mask. He started taking very deep breaths through his oxygen mask. He took off his oxygen mask, and he turned to the crew chief and said, "Man that oxygen sure does help!" The crew chief picked up the end of his oxygen hose and said, "But sir, you do not have your oxygen hose connected." I think he felt a whole lot better after he connected the hose. Our group did not run into the Germans that day. Christmas and New Years mean a lot to me because of those experiences.

After I had flown 26 out of 27 missions, I went to the flight surgeon and told him that I was very tired, and I needed a rest. He sent me on leave. When I got to Peterborough, England, on January 15th, I turned on the radio and learned that the Air Force had one of the biggest air battles that day. Our group had destroyed 20 Germans and had damaged several others without the loss of a man. The pilot that took my place as element lead destroyed one airplane. He ended up becoming an ace with five victories before the war was over. One thing that really hurts a pilot was for him to miss an air battle. That's why you were there, and I had missed it. It turned out that I missed three air battles including that one. The next one I missed was in February when I was sent to Farnborough on the southern coast of England to a rest home. I thought that I did not need to nor did I want to go. I told them when I came back, "I'm more flak-happy now than I was before I went in there!" There was a bunch of bomber pilots there, and they really needed it. They had a lot of horror stories to tell. Fighter pilots did not have it near as bad as the bomber crews did.

ROSS-NAZZAL: So many men did suffer during World War II. Were there other hardships that you had to endure in terms of food rations for instance?

LEE: There is no *good* way to fight a war, but if you did, flying the P-51 Mustang with the Eighth Air Force out of England had to be the best duty of all. Being in the Air Corps as officers, we were pretty well fed. Of course, we got very tired of canned green eggs and Spam. They did have some pretty severe rationing in England. When you would go into town and you ordered meat, it would be some kind of a burger or meat loaf, or something like that, and half of it was bread. We did not get fresh eggs in the mess hall. There was one enlisted man in our

squadron that was dating an English girl so he was able to bring us fresh eggs from the farm. We would cook them in our squadron's waiting room. It was a delicacy to get fresh eggs, but we didn't have it too hard as far as those kinds of things.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What was it like being an American in England?

LEE: They welcomed us with open arms over there. They really did. They were very nice to us. When I took my first leave, of course, Vince Rudnick and I went to London and we went to Piccadilly Circus which was packed with all of the servicemen. That is where all the nightclubs



were and the streetwalkers (left).

We took a guided tour of the bombed areas in England. They had a great underground subway that was far superior to what I saw in New York City after the war. When the air raid sirens would go off, they would go into these underground subways. When the air raids were

over, they would come out and continue on as best that they could.

I have to draw a parallel to 9/11 [2001] in this country as I saw it. Four bombs in the form of airplanes were sent to bomb us. Three of the bombs hit their targets, with two hitting the Twin Towers [World Trade Center] in New York, and one hitting the Pentagon in Washington DC. One mission that was scheduled to hit the [US] Capitol was stopped by some very brave men in which they all lost their lives. This brought our country to almost a complete stop. All airline flights were canceled, the stock markets were closed down, and many other things. I thought how unprepared we were to meet an emergency. We had a lot to learn from the British.

When I went to London on my second leave, after the first night I said, “What the hell am I doing here?” So I got on a train, went right on back north, past my base up to Peterborough, England. After that I would go to visit different cities. They opened their homes to us. They let us spend the night in their homes and fed us. We would take them rations of cigarettes, women’s hose, soap, and things that were hard for them to get. I just loved England. Flying over England and Scotland with their white fences and livestock in their rolling green pastures, it looked just like I was back in Virginia. It was absolutely gorgeous. The people were really very nice to us. It was like the state of Virginia.

I flew 52 combat missions. When I got over there, the number of hours required for a tour of duty steadily increased from 225, to 250, and up to 275 hours. When the war ended in May 1945, I had flown 275 hours. This averaged about 5½ hours a mission. My longest mission was 6 hours and 40 minutes. When the war ended, I had finished a tour of duty, and I had been put in for the rank of captain before I was 21 years old. In those days we had to grow up fast.



Here I am on the front row, sixth from the left under the prop tip, where I can now be seen.

We then started training to go to the South Pacific. I could have gone home, but I wasn't about to go home and let my buddies go to the South Pacific without me. Of course we always tell the guys that were *in* the South Pacific that that's why they ended the war in the South Pacific because the Japanese heard that we were coming. But the atom bombs were what stopped the war in Japan, not us. When the atom bomb was dropped, we were very thankful that that had happened. It was the right thing to do in spite of the people who are trying to rewrite history and say how horrible it was. The Japanese started the war. It not only saved American lives but Japanese lives as well. It was very necessary.

ROSS-NAZZAL: When you weren't flying a mission, what were your duties and assignments?

LEE: We flew enough that we didn't need any other additional assignments. We did go to a number of classes after the war. Some of the older or more experienced pilots took on additional jobs like operations and were responsible for following the status of all airplanes. I was given the job of training the new recruits in formation flying, aerobatics, and gunnery.

When you flew as a flight, you flew in a "V" formation with four men in a flight. [Demonstrates] The flight leader had a wingman on his left. This was his wingman. The element leader was on the right hand side of the flight leader with his wingman on his right. This is an element leader with his wingman. When you would go into combat, the flight leader would have a wingman, and the element leader would have a wingman. The wingman's responsibility was to protect their respective leader. That was the wingman's job. So I went from being a wingman, to an element leader, to becoming a flight leader.



When the squadron took off on a mission it could have three or four flights, which would be 12 or 16 planes. A maximum effort could be 6 flights of 24 airplanes. When you had six flights, you would have two squadron commanders, one being the head of the A group, and another commander being the head of the B group. I had a couple of missions when the group commander or deputy commander led our group. One of the stories I have to tell is one where the group commander was leading our particular group, and we ran into a gaggle of 10 to 15 ME-262 jet airplanes. But first let me describe some of the missions we flew. Like I said, we escorted bombers, which were B-17s and the B-24s. We also conducted strafing missions of airports, train marshaling yards, trucks, and other targets of opportunity. We also escorted British Mosquitoes (above). The British Mosquito was made out of plywood, believe it or not. I escorted them a couple of times on photo reconnaissance missions all the way to Prague and Brux in Czechoslovakia.

On my first encounter that I had with a jet, I don't know how it happened, but I was flying alone on my squadron commander's wing. We were trying to catch up with the bombers. Here came this jet gliding in on a right turn like this [demonstrates] in front of us looking at the bombers. We were coming in behind him like this [demonstrates], and he didn't see us. We were right on top of him when my squadron commander and I dropped our wing tanks. When you do that you have to switch from your external wing tanks to your internal tanks. We were right up on top of him when all of a sudden the German leveled out. I can still see him today, looking right at me. All I had to do was pull the trigger, and I could have shot him down. But at

that time, my Squadron Commander's engine quit, "boom!" just like that. It was just like he'd hit a brick wall. We were trained that you had to stay with your leader so I instinctively cut my engine.



I stayed with my squadron commander, which is what I was supposed to do, because if I had shot at the German, I might have lost my squadron deputy commander. I don't think that I would have. Anytime a pilot shot down a German jet, he automatically received a DFC [Distinguished Flying Cross] for it. I still wonder to this day whether I would have gotten a DFC or whether I would have gotten court-martialed for leaving my leader. In combat, things happen in split seconds.

I followed him from about 25,000 feet down to about 10,000 feet before he ever got the engine started. He says that he had a vapor lock. I had never heard of anybody else having a

vapor lock when he switched tanks. I think that he was so excited that he just forgot to switch his tanks. Well to this day, it is hard for me to believe that. That's my opinion. I stuck with him, and we got home all right.

On my second encounter with an ME-262 jet, I was leading a flight, and this jet came tooling in behind the bombers. I turned around toward him.



When he took off, I realized that I was now out of position escorting the bombers. The bombers had gotten way ahead of us so I had to firewall it to get back to the bombers. The jet didn't return.

The other time that I was referring to earlier was when we had an encounter with the jets. Colonel Montgomery, our group commander, was leading the group as the head of our squadron. The bombers would fly at approximately 24,000 to 25,000 feet. We would escort the bombers from 28,000 to 30,000 feet. The German jets would come gliding in at about 35,000 feet with their engines off, and we could not see them. When they would start their dive, they would start their engines, and you could see their contrails. You would start your dives to intercept them before they could hit the bombers. In the P-51, you could keep up with a jet in a dive, and you could turn inside of them. We got most of our kills when they would pull out on the deck. The group must have known something. Colonel Montgomery was leading our squadron below, in front of the bombers in spread formation at about 20,000 feet.

I was the flight commander of his second flight on his left with the third and fourth flights over here on his right. [Demonstrates] I had excellent eyesight. I could see better than most people, and I had excellent peripheral vision. When hunting, I could see a squirrel in the woods out of the corner of my eye, on a limb, shaking a leaf or dropping an acorn. In combat things happen in *seconds or split seconds*. I was the first to spot these 15 to 20 jets climbing up at 9 o'clock. The picture [on the next page] shows the actual group of jets that we ran into on that mission.



I called them out, dropped my wing tanks, and I led my flight into them head on. The closure rate was so fast and was something I had not ever experienced before. Neither we nor the Germans got a shot off. It became a game of "chicken," and they broke first and we didn't. That happened in *seconds*. I made a quick left turn. I expected them to engage, but they didn't. Their mission was to attack the bombers.

Captain Hollings who was head of the third flight and flying on the right of the group commander rolled over in a "Split S" behind this jet that had broken down. A pilot could withstand about three to four Gs [gravity] before he would black out. We had G suits, and with them you could withstand eight to ten Gs without blacking out. Captain Hollins pulled such high Gs behind the jet that he broke the bolts in his seat and the seat dropped down. He could hardly get his head up high enough to see through his gun site, and there was this German jet. He

pulled the trigger, and he knocked him down. That was in a *split second*. He got the DFC for that.

Well, our other two squadrons were up escorting the bombers at about 28,000 feet. Like I said earlier, the German jets would glide in at about 35,000 feet with their engines off, and you could not see them. The P-51 could keep up with a jet in a dive, and they could turn inside of it. When the jet would start their dive you could see their jet trail and start your dive to intercept them before they hit the bombers. We got most of our kills when they pulled out on the deck. Our pilots intercepted them, and they claimed six destroyed. They ended up getting credit for five destroyed and one damaged.

Lieutenant Peterburs followed a jet all the way to the deck, hit him, and then followed him over to his airbase, which was about 125 miles northwest of Berlin. He started strafing the airbase and called the group commander and told him where he was. Colonel Montgomery led us over to the Airfield. Lieutenant Peterburs claimed that he'd destroyed five airplanes on the ground. Before we got there, he had been hit by flak. He had to bail out and was captured by the Germans. When we got there we started strafing the airfield. I led the second flight across the field, and the field was full of burning airplanes. I had spotted some airplanes parked over in the woods, so I went after them. When I was going around for the third pass, Colonel Montgomery called and said, "One more pass boys and then we'll go home." Well if he hadn't said anything I think I would have been all right. On that last pass it was like *time stood still*. My plane did take a hit on that last strafing pass. It turned out that it was likely small-arms fire.

When I got home, the crew chief showed me where it had come right through the bottom of the engine's nacelle and was headed right straight for my fuel pump when it hit a brace. If it had hit that fuel pump, I would have lost the airplane right there. I forget the exact amount of

planes destroyed and damaged that day. It was the group's highest victories for airplanes destroyed on one mission in one day. It set the record for the most airplanes destroyed on one mission in the Eighth Air Force. The number of the airplanes destroyed or damaged by our squadron on that day was: 1 jet, 27 airplanes destroyed, and 9 damaged. The other two squadrons that were with the bombers went down and strafed airfields in Berlin and Fossberg. That day the group destroyed 5 jets in the air with 1 damaged, and 52 planes on the ground with 23 damaged. That was the biggest mission that I was on.

I took my wingman all the way to the east coast of England where we landed at an Air Force base. His plane was shot up so badly that his plane never flew again. I had to refuel. Our Air Force base was at King's Cliffe, near Peterborough, England, which was the farthest fighter base inland in the Northwest. I flew back to the base after dark, so I had to make a night landing, which I had never done before in a P-51. I was not worried about it because I thought that if I had trained for it I would have gone up by myself anyway. When you land you are in a left turn and looking out of the left side. I found out later that at night you never looked out of the right side of the airplane because the exhaust flames could blind you. I landed okay. Talk about "blind luck!"

I was told that Colonel Montgomery and I were the only two pilots in the squadron that got back to base that night. Some had to crash land, some landed on bases in France, and I think everyone else had to stop and get gas. The three pilots that were shot down were captured by the Germans. They were released at the end of the war. No one was killed. There was plenty of flak. Like I say, I don't know how we got through it. I guess God was my copilot. That was one of my most interesting missions, and that was one of the missions for which I got the DFC.

What else went along with that mission? The group commander's wingman was F/O [First Officer] Fred Jurgens, and they were the first flight that went across the field. I was leading the second flight. I think it was on his second pass when Jurgens was right on the deck and flak hit his tail and it knocked him over completely on his back. The gun camera keeps running after you have stopped firing your guns, so that you can see what damage that you may have been sustained. It showed him turning completely over on his back. He had gotten the airplane about three quarters of the way back over when the camera stopped. I know this because I saw the film. He was able to get back across enemy lines and brought his gun tape back.

I asked him, "How in the hell did you do that?" He said, "Well, when I flipped over on my back like that, I threw the stick hard up into the left front corner and just kicked hard left rudder." To this day I wonder if I would have been able to do what he did. Since I'm still thinking about it, I probably would not have done so. It was a fantastic piece of flying. He had destroyed eight airplanes and set a record for the most planes destroyed on one mission in the Eighth Air Force. For this mission he was awarded the Silver Star. We nicknamed him "Ace Jurgens."

The other one was on a strafing mission on which I was flying element lead for Lieutenant Colonel Gustke, the group's deputy CO. We were strafing this marshaling yard.



They had to be able to keep those trains running because that was the German's bread and butter. Generally, when you hit a marshaling yard, you would make one pass and keep on going because it had such heavy flak installations. Lieutenant Colonel Gustke turned around and went back a second time. He then turned around and went back a

third time. On the third time around, I was walking on flak, and so I went for the flak tower instead of going for a train.

Then when we were flying further on, Lieutenant Colonel Gustke saw a German ME-410 bomber. He flipped over real fast and went after the bomber. He lost the bomber in the haze, and it upset him. He had also lost his wingman on his quick turn into the haze. He looked around and asked his wingman, "Where in the hell are you? If you don't get the hell back up on my wing, I'm going to shoot your ass down." Somebody came on the mike and said, "We've got you covered colonel." As a result of that mission, he was grounded. Colonel Montgomery, along with his staff and the flight surgeon, told him that he was going to have to send him back to the States.

My flight surgeon, Captain Roberts, told me that he stood there with his back to the wall with clinched fists and said that he was going to fight them all. He was on his third tour of duty so he'd really become "flak happy." That was what we called it when a pilot had a break down. Nobody liked flying with him. A few years ago I talked to my ex-flight commander, Cliffe Keys, about him. He was my flight commander before he got his kneecap shot off by flak. How he was able to fly his airplane back and land on an emergency field close to our base is an amazing story. I became the flight commander after he was sent back to the States. We both had the same feelings about that guy.

A few years ago, I saw him at our 20th Fighter Group Association's Reunion. He had become a general and he was the commander for a while at the Ellington Air Force Base here in Houston, Texas. He gave a talk to us and he had a good sense of humor and everything. I was so glad to find out that he was all right again, and that he seemed to have all of his faculties. I

had wondered if a person that had gotten that bad would ever recover. He did, but I still remember how bad he was as a leader in combat.



There was another mission that I was on as a flight commander. All of a sudden, I spotted a train almost directly below us. I rolled over almost into a split S. The last time I looked at my airspeed indicator, I was doing 650 miles an hour. At that time we didn't know anything about compressibility. It turned out that some pilots did reach compressibility, and they didn't know how to get out of it, so they crashed and were killed. You could reach compressibility at about 715 miles per hour. That's how close I came to exceeding the limits of that airplane.

It still scares me that I had almost led my flight into compressibility. When we pulled out of the dive to strafe the train, the sides of a boxcar opened up, and their anti-aircraft guns opened up. Even at those speeds my wingman was hit, and he had to crash-land on the continent. He survived. When you hit a train's engine it was quite spectacular with all of the steam coming out of the engine. The Germans would take it back in and weld patches back over the holes, and they would have it back in operation again in a very short period of time.

Let me see if I have any more stories to tell you. One of the best missions that I was on was a photo recon [reconnaissance] mission escorting the British Mosquitoes over Brux and Prague in Czechoslovakia. We were a flight of four escorting two British Mosquitoes. I was on three raids over Berlin, Germany, and each one was bigger than the one before. On this

particular mission to Berlin there were over 2,000 airplanes in the air. That's a lot of airplanes in the air at one time. This was one of the largest air raids over Europe.

We took off after the bombers had taken off, and their fighter escorts were already in the air. We picked them up on the end of the bomber stream on the European coast over Holland. We were flying faster than the bombers, and we caught up with the lead bombers as they reached Berlin. There was a complete overcast over the continent. I was monitoring the bomber frequency. The observer for the weather called in and said, "Come and get her boys, she's wide open!" It looked like somebody had taken a big knife and cut out the clouds, and there was Berlin below, wide open.



As we went past Berlin, I watched the first group of bombers drop their bombs on Berlin. The bombers have to fly straight and level through the flak on their bomb runs over the target. The German fighters were waiting for them to come through the other side of the flak. About the time the first bombers broke out of the flak, we made our turn south to go to Czechoslovakia. Here came some German fighters after us, but we were told not to engage because our job was to escort the British to Czechoslovakia. Sure enough, the fighters finally turned around and went back to the bombers. The diversionary tactics that they had planned for the mission with us flying with the bombers had worked. We went on to Czechoslovakia for a successful photo recon mission.

Those were some of the kinds of missions that we flew. After the war had ended, I was assigned to lead the 79th Fighter Squadron of four flights for a “Fly By” over London, England. This was to be a demonstration by the Eighth Air Force for General [Dwight D.] Eisenhower and his staff, the English and their staff, and a Russian general and his staff. I do not know if the French were included or not. After we were in the air, the mission was scrubbed because of bad weather over London. I will have to say that my squadron looked very good in formation that day. They were WWII Veterans! I was very proud of them.

When the bombers would fly over their targets, as I said, the bombers would have to fly straight and level. The German anti-aircraft were good, very good! In fact, I have a German friend today, Ed Pokora, who was an anti-aircraft gunner for the Germans. He was conscripted into the German’s army when he was 16 years old. He was sent to Russia when the Germans invaded it. That’s where he was when I was flying over Europe. His outfit was captured by the Russians, and the Russians killed everybody in that group except him. The reason he was saved was because the officer that was head of the group found out that Ed knew how to play the

accordion, and he wanted Ed to teach him to play the accordion. He survived there, but then the Russians sent him to an internment camp in Yugoslavia. The Russians were going to kill all of the German POWs [Prisoners of War] in that camp. On a stormy winter cold night, he snuck out of camp, dived into a cold river, and escaped. We kid about how we were shooting at each other in the war, which we never did. He's a good friend of mine today. Isn't that an interesting story?

I told you that the bombers had to fly straight and level over the target. The German anti-aircraft were very good. We would sit there and watch them being hit, and spinning down on fire. We would sit there and try to count the parachutes coming out of the airplane and praying and hoping that everybody would get out safely. It was not a pretty sight.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I imagine that was very difficult being where you were and watching all of your friends.

LEE: Yes, now that was 66 and 67 years ago, and I still have a hard time when I think or talk about it.

[End of interview]