

The American Fighter Aces Association
Oral Interviews
The Museum of Flight
Seattle, Washington

Rex T. Barber

Interviewed by: Bruce Porter

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Abstract:

Fighter ace Rex T. Barber is interviewed by historian Bruce T. Porter about his military service with the United States Army Air Forces during World War II. Barber describes his wartime experiences as a fighter pilot and his time with the 449th Fighter Squadron in the China-India-Burma Theater. Special focus on an incident in April 1944 in which Barber was injured during a bailout and spent several weeks evading Japanese troops with the help of Chinese guerillas.

Biography:

Rex T. Barber was born on May 6, 1917 in Culver, Oregon. He joined the United States Army Air Forces in 1940 and graduated from flight school the following year. Barber served two tours of duty during World War II, one in the Pacific Theater with the 70th Fighter Squadron and 339th Fighter Squadron and one in the China-India-Burma Theater with the 449th Fighter Squadron. During his first tour, he participated in the shoot-down of Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto's plane on April 18, 1943, known as Operation Vengeance. Barber remained in the military after the war and commanded the 29th Fighter Squadron and 27th Fighter Squadron. He retired as a colonel in 1961 and passed away in 2001.

Biographical information courtesy of: Boyce, Ward J., ed., American fighter aces album. Mesa, Ariz: American Fighter Aces Association, 1996.

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Transcript:

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Rex T. Barber

[START OF INTERVIEW]

[Begin Side A]

00:00:00

[Introduction]

BRUCE PORTER: Good morning, Eric. This is Bruce Porter speaking from Redmond, Oregon, and the time is exactly 10 o'clock Saturday morning. After my conversation with you by the phone, I'm starting this tape out—and give you the phone number and information on Rex Barber. It's [telephone number]. His address is [address in Terrebonne, Oregon]. In taping there, he told me a lot of things about the Yamamoto, and him coming back. And I didn't start this tape until a little later on, so you'll have to wait until it catches up with it. But we'll—and then get in touch with him or me and we'll work this out, okay?

00:01:16

[recording stops and starts again 00:01:16]

[Assessing training at Westover Field]

REX T. BARBER: ...the pilots right out of flying school up there to get training in bombing, dive bombing, strafing, and aerial gunnery. And they were flying P-47s. That's a training airplane. And so myself and three other people from the Yamamoto all went up there, were assigned to a training command. Well, when we got into the—got up there to Westover Field, we were greeted very warmly by the Colonel there, who said he was very happy to have us there and that they would certainly welcome any suggestions we had concerning how they were training these boys.

00:02:28

RTB: And so we went to the squadron. And, well, they were towing targets and shooting at them and they were dive bombing and so forth, and especially in the target shooting. We had several corrections that we thought they should make and—which would give them a better idea of leading an airplane and so forth. But the Squadron Commander didn't want to change any of the things they were doing. And they weren't really anxious to make any changes in their method of training, which we knew was wrong. But nothing we could do about it. We were there to help if they wanted us to.

[Disposing of primer cord]

And so one day, a sergeant brought in an old roll of rope and laid it on the table. He said, “I found this and I don’t know what it is.” And so I went over and looked at it, and it was primer cord. And primer cord, you know, is what they blow the bridges down with there, and a very powerful explosive. And so I told them, “We better get rid of this stuff.” So the hangars there were fairly close together, and there was glass windows on each side of the hangar. And so me and this other gentleman spread this cord out the full length of the hangar in this hall. And I really didn’t know how powerful this stuff was. So we put a cap on, got up against the wall—we’re facing the building—and touched it off. Well, it almost blew our clothes off, and it blew all the windows out of the hangar.

00:05:03

BP: Dear lord.

RTB: Oh, it was a mess. And so they were pretty mad about that.

[Joining the Chinese-American Wing]

RTB: And so about two days later, a fellow named John Dunning, who I had some previous acquaintance with, came into the—up there. And had an order from headquarters, Air Force, that he had the right to take any pilot who wanted to go and who he wanted, out of any squadron, and to equip what they called the “Chinese-American Wing.” But General Chennault had—and Chiang Kai-shek were concerned about the ability of the Chinese Air Force to function at the end of the war, when we would pull out. And they knew that they didn’t have the proper training to handle their airplanes and so forth.

So they formed this Chinese-American Wing, as they called it. It was equipped with P-40s, and B-25s. And we went to Karachi, India, and—to start the training. I, incidentally, when we went in to see the Colonel and, uh—concerning our leaving, he jumped out of his chair, and he says, “Where’s the paper? I want to sign it quick. I’ve been trying to figure out whether I was going to court-martial this guy or not.” [unintelligible 00:07:12]

BP: [laughs]

RTB: And he says, “This...signing this. It’s over.” And so all of us that came—myself and three others who came from the Yamamoto mission squadron, or from the 339—were all volunteered to go to the Chinese-American Wing. So we—

BP: What were their names, Rex? Do you remember who they were—you were with?

[pause]

BP: Oh, it's not that important.

RTB: I—off-hand, I don't.

BP: Yeah, yeah. Okay, okay.

RTB: The mind's the first thing to go.

BP: Yeah, I know what you're talking about. It happens to me all the time.

00:07:57

RTB: Second thing to go.

BP: Okay.

RTB: Anyway, we went down to—I thought it was a Navy base there.

BP: Whereabouts—are you in—on the coast?

RTB: On the East Coast.

BP: On the East Coast. Norfolk?

RTB: What?

BP: Norfolk? Pensacola?

RTB: Norfolk.

BP: Norfolk. Yeah.

RTB: We went down to Norfolk, and there we were put on a ship to go to Karachi, India. Well, we went over into—and the ship beached at a place in North Africa, where I was. And so we had a chance to catch a ride to Karachi with the C-47. So we all piled aboard a C-47 and left. We didn't tell anybody about it. And so, you know, we got to Karachi. And the way they worked this, the squadron there was fully equipped and manned by Chinese, and also was fully equipped and manned by Americans. And so we taught them everything about running a squadron, about the maintenance on the airplanes and everything.

00:10:22

[Joining the 449th Fighter Squadron]

RTB: And so about that time, why, General Chennault heard that I was down there, and he had just gotten a new squadron from North Africa that was—all the senior people in the squadron had been sent home. And the junior—just junior officers in the squadron. So he ordered me out

of the Chinese-American Wing, up into this new squadron—of what's called the 449s in China. And I was made second-in-command of the squadron. The command of the squadron was—he assigned an AVG to man the squadron. And so we were equipped with—and sent up into Central China, along the Yangtze River. And the boys in the squadron were very poorly trained, and we tried to get Chennault to let us go back to India and train these people for a month and then bring them back.

But he said he couldn't spare them, and he didn't want to do that. So we stayed there. And see, he had a law there in China, or a rule, that you could not take off on a mission until you had enough fuel on the base to refuel the airplanes when you got back. And that was a good rule. Because if he'd done otherwise, why, the—if the Japanese followed us in and we had no fuel to refuel with, why, they could—it would be deadly. So his rule of acquiring enough gas to refuel when we got back from a mission was very good. And—but we had not been able to train these young pilots in anything at all except on these various missions we run. And it was not very satisfactory, and they were not in very good shape to fly.

BP: Were they flying P-40s then? Or you trained them?

RTB: No, P-38s.

BP: Oh, you got P-38s in the new outfit?

00:13:43

RTB: It was an outfit from China. That's why they pulled me up there—

BP: I see. Okay.

RTB: ... was because this was a squadron P-38s, 449th. And so—well, as fuel was so scarce, that from the first of January of '44 until the—April 18th, '44, I ran 20-week missions. In about the same length of time in the 13th Air Force, when I was in the 339th Squadron, I had run 110 missions.

BP: A quarter of them, huh? About a quarter of the time?

RTB: Yeah. About the same length of time.

00:14:43

BP: Yeah.

RTB: And so, as you can see, we didn't fly very much.

BP: Yeah.

[Bailout over Japanese-occupied China (April 1944)]

RTB: And so we got three new boys in the squadron, new pilots out of flying school. Well, we had no gas to train them on. They were about to lose their fly pay. And then John Dunning came in, bringing in two B-25s out of the Chinese-American Wing, and landed at our base. And he wanted to go up the Yangtze River and shoot stuff in the river. They had mounted 75-millimeter canons in the nose of the B-25s. And he wanted to see how effective it would be. So we took eight P-38s, and I assigned the three junior pilots that were in there and had not been able to get any flying time to go. One on my wing and another on my element leader's wing and another on the other—on the flight leaders from the other squadron. I mean, the other eight—or [unintelligible 00:16:13]. We had eight P-38s.

Well, we took off and went up the Yangtze River, started down, and about the only thing we could—there were sampan up there and he would shoot at them with that 75-millimeter cannon, but the target was just too small for that gun to hit. It was not that accurate. Done all right against a big ship. Or it'd been all right against things at the dock or someplace like that. But—or for getting the small boats that they ship there, or carry up the river [unintelligible 00:17:04]. Well, we watched them, and all of a sudden, I saw contrails and then I saw Zeros up close. And I [unintelligible 00:17:19].

So I hollered at Dunning to turn and go home and we'd cover him. So we rolled around and took off for home. Well, in that process, my wingman—who was a new man—and I turned too sharply, I'll admit. And he lost a wing back behind us. And so here, two Zeros came down on him. I hollered at him to hit the deck, and we'd cover him. He was flying straight and level. Had to be scared to death.

00:18:00

RTB: Well, I was furious. And so I can see they're going to make another pass at him, going to shoot him down. So I just rolled up out of formation and went back after him. And he—they were just ready to make a pass at him, just started to make a pass. And they saw me coming, and they broke straight up in the air. And I was mad. 'Cause this is something you never can do in combat, is get mad. You got to keep your head about you. Instead of me rolling on around and going back and covering him on the way out, I chased those Zeros up in the air. Straight up—they went almost straight up, and I was behind them. Well, you can't zoom a Zero.

BP: That's for sure.

RTB: And so I stalled out and I—as I straightened out, the Zero—one of the Zeros came down on me, sitting right as you turn. Well, I wanted to ride that airplane as far as I could to get as far away from the Japanese camp as possible, which was just ahead. We got in too close to where the Japanese were.

BP: Did your wingman—was—he's gone, that guy that you saved, huh?

RTB: He's gone, yeah. He went on out. And so to the west where we were going, there was a lake. And along the edge of this lake, there was a railroad with a high fence along it. And on one side of the fence, up—was a Japanese camp. And on the other side was open territory. See, the Japanese did not try to control the back country, because they didn't have enough people to do it all the time.

00:20:16

BP: Yeah, yeah.

RTB: And they just took care of the critical areas, the large cities or the roads and things like this. And the villages in the back country were not bothered. And so my engine was burning badly, and I was trying to get as far away as I could.

BP: Your right engine?

RTB: My right engine, yeah. So I saw it start to shudder, and I knew that it would breakout, 'cause it was burning badly. And so I just tucked my feet in the seat and jumped straight up. And I did not [unintelligible 00:21:25] P-38. And I went out, and I—

BP: What altitude were you then?

RTB: [unintelligible 00:21:29] thousand feet.

BP: [unintelligible 00:21:31]

RTB: And I hit the tail on the way down.

00:21:39

BP: Oh, boy. Ooh.

RTB: Broke my left—or my right arm and knocked it out of joint and broke it and so forth. And I hit my ankle, my right ankle also—

BP: Boy, ain't you lucky you didn't get—

RTB: ...and damaged it. And I didn't—I cracked the ankle bone. I didn't break any big bones. And I—the strange thing is I hit the ground and stood up. I didn't fall down. I hit the ground—just I'm sure I was in oscillation and I was just at the right point in that oscillation that it crashed. But anyway—and I did hit in a trail there. Out from the lake, there was this ridge of mountains around, very mild ones. And I hit in the trail. And two little Chinese boys—I say 10 to 12 years old—ran up to me, gathered my parachute up, and they seemed to pretty well know how to handle a parachute. And one of them got under each arm and carried me up this trail

[unintelligible 00:23:14], off the trail. And then we started to hear Japanese—had formed a line to look for me. And so these boys, these two boys, ran over into a ravine with me and covered me up with a bunch of brush in there.

BP: I'll be darned.

RTB: And they motioned at me to be silent, and they ran away. See, Chiang Kai-shek had, in the back country, what they called "guerillas." They were his army troops, and they were back there to rescue American pilots—

BP: I see.

RTB: Or any other pilot that was there except for the Japanese.

BP: Our side of the fence.

[Rescued by Chinese guerillas]

RTB: Why, and this was through all of China. They had these troops scattered out. And so pretty soon I could hear the Japanese hollering back and forth to one another. And one of them almost walked right beside the pile of brush but didn't see me and went on. Well, very shortly after that, these two Chinese boys brought the guerillas in to where they had hidden me, and they had taken a door off a house. The doors are on pegs, you know.

BP: Yeah.

00:24:58

RTB: And so they had four guerillas that threw me on this door and carried me down to a village, which was on the other side of the Japanese camp. The Japanese camp never bothered this village.

BP: I see.

RTB: Strange thing, but they just didn't get into the back country at all. And so, when I got to the village, why, they put me in bed there in a kind of a cot. And wasn't too bad of bed, really. And there were two young men in there, about seven—well, they were 17 years old. They were twins, and they'd been born and raised in the British compound in Shanghai. The British were running the electrical power company for Shanghai.

BP: I'll be darned.

00:26:18

RTB: They were born and raised there. And they knew the Americans. They spoke perfect English. And so the man who was in charge of the guerillas assigned these boys to be my handymen. And so they talked and very friendly, very nice, and knew, of course—spoke perfect English. And they said, “Now, we know what you think of a Chinese doctor. There’s going to be a Chinese doctor come in and look at your arm,” and so forth. “And please don’t say anything to embarrass him, because he does do a [unintelligible 00:27:09] the village, and we don’t want to embarrass him. Thank you.” So I said, “All right.” Well, this guy come in. My arm was black below my elbow, clear to clear to my shoulder—

BP: Good lord.

RTB: And the bones were [crumped?] around and had been knocked out of joint. And so he looked at it, poked around on it. He said, “[unintelligible 00:27:48].” I could see [unintelligible 00:27:49], but I didn’t say anything. So—but he said, “I want...” So he—you see that basket over there?

BP: Hm-hmm [affirmative].

RTB: Well, that basket had been honed out of wood instead of that. And that’s about what they put on my bed, and they filled that with hot water. He had the—had—they told the women in the village that he wanted my arm to stay in hot water until he told them to take it out, to quit. And so I buried my arm in that tub, and he brought up a stool alongside the bed. It was a terrible night. I lay there with—in the water as long as I could stand it, and they kept changing it, keeping it hot.

00:28:53

RTB: Well, after about eight or ten days, why, the swelling had gone down fairly well in my arm. I still had—oh, of course, the [unintelligible 00:29:11]. But—and my—they had bound up my ankle and it was not in too bad a shape. So the doctor said—told the guerillas, the China guerillas, they could take me out and so they did. They put me in a bamboo seat with poles through it on each side. And then there’s two people on each pole, one in front and one behind. There were four people carrying it.

BP: Yeah, I get you. Two on the other side. Yeah.

RTB: And they started carrying me out. We started, uh—they wanted me—the reason they were interested in my leg was that they wanted me, in case we were jumped by the Japanese, that I could get out of this basket and run into the brush. Well—

00:30:52

[End Side A]

[Begin Side B]

00:00:00

[An eventful journey back to base]

BP: Okay, Rex.

RTB: So we started out and we would go to—each day, we'd go so far. All would go on foot, except me, who'd been carried.

BP: Hm-hmm [affirmative]. How many miles you figure you traveled that first...? Ten, 15, maybe?

RTB: Oh, probably ten miles.

00:00:30

BP: Yeah.

RTB: And so we would stop at a Chinese Army camp or at a town.

BP: Hm-hmm [affirmative].

RTB: And stay with somebody there in the town on the way back. And so anyway, we go—finally came to this Chinese Army camp. And so the commander there of the camp wanted me to make a speech to these people and tell them about my equipment and how to handle it and so forth. And it was—they had a—quite a nice platform. The platform, which was circled with—and had a cover over it and so forth. And then the troops stood out here in front of it.

BP: Yeah.

RTB: And it was probably six feet in the air, the platform. And so we got all the troops out there, or they did, and I and my two handymen were on the plat—they were the interpreters. And on this platform, inside, there was—I don't know how to explain it, but it was a loop that's, uh—

BP: Sort of a circular pattern?

00:02:42

RTB: Circular pattern, with all open on one side. And so on the walls there was Chiang Kai-Shek, had his picture there. Roosevelt and, uh—

BP: Churchill?

RTB: Churchill. There were four people.

BP: Stalin?

RTB: Well, I don't remember who the fourth one was. Roosevelt and Churchill, Chiang Kai-Shek, and—well, it's escaped me.

BP: Yeah.

RTB: But anyway, the Chinese—the troops were all out there in the front. And then they started to—after we showed them about the equipment and so forth, best we could, and how you got to open a parachute and so forth, they all started to sing. And they sang some Chinese song. And then when they finished, they clapped, and so forth. And then they were saying something. I asked my interpreter what they saying, and they said they understand that I was quite a singer and they wanted to hear a song." I said, "I don't sing at all." He says, "You'll have to sing. You'll have to do something." Because they were—kept clapping and hollering, clapping.

00:05:04

RTB: And I said, "Well, I'll point to one of these pictures, and you interpret what I'm going to sing." So we started out, "When I was a servant last down on Drury Lane. My master was a kindly man. My mistress was the same." And then they would tell that I was saying about Churchill, and then doing a good job of it, too. Yeah. And then, as I went on down, singing the song—and then one guy and the other people around me there—they're poor people. And as you know, "As I was servant last down on Drury Lane. My master was a kindly man. My mistress was the same. When along come a pilot merry as can be, and he is the cause of all my misery. Singing bell bottom trousers, [unintelligible 00:06:07]. He'll—let him climb a riggin' like his daddy used to do." And—you've heard that song?

BP: Yeah. Oh, yeah, yeah. That's good. You've got quite a voice.

RTB: And so they pointed right around there. Everybody was clapping. And I hadn't noticed it, but there was a man that rode down on a bicycle right down the middle of it and stopped. And I looked around, and he was a Catholic priest that was up there in that country helping people, our Americans. He said, "I've heard a lot of interpretations to that song, but I've never heard anything like this," and laughed. And so then we went on to the next village.

00:06:59

RTB: And this was quite a nice village. And so they were, uh—that night, I was to stay with the mayor of the town. He had a very nice house and so forth. So we all went in and had dinner with him. He had quite a spread for us and so forth. And so he had a very heavy wife. She was really fat, just unbelievably fat. And so we were all around after dinner standing around talking, and she motioned me to come over. So I went over to her, and she says to me, "Pokey, pokey? Pokey, pokey?"

BP: [laughs]

RTB: And that's—means something [unintelligible 00:08:05]. But I couldn't imagine her and at her own house, as fat as she was. But anyway, so I call one of my men over, one of the two interpreters, and I asked him, I says, "What is this lady trying to tell me?" So they: "Oh, she says do you want to play—do you know how to play poker?" And I says, "Yes, I know how to play poker." So they got a table. There's seven of us around it. And she was one of them right across the table from me and we sat down. See, the—in our pack, we each had American money and usually about a thousand dollars' worth to help us out if we needed it. So I put that out on the table. We started playing. I won a little and lost a little and won a little. And of course, I'd played enough poker that I—whenever I play with strangers, I'm very suspicious of them.

00:09:06

RTB: But I couldn't see anything going wrong, so everything seemed to be very up and up. So it was getting a little late in the evening, and so I looked at my cards. I had three aces, all three. And so I bet a little and somebody else bet a little around and so then it came time to draw. And so I drew for two cards, and she drew three cards. She'd stayed in the pot. So it ended up, at least, I had a—cut that thing off for a minute.

[recording stops and starts again 00:10:19]

RTB: ...Three aces and I caught a pair of eights. And so I felt pretty good about that. And she drew three cards. She [unintelligible 00:10:41]. And so I bet a substantial amount of money. And she called me and raised it. Well, I—"You got a full house." She'd drawn three cards. I was pretty confident. So anyway, it finally ended that I bet all the money I had on the table, and she called it. She laid down a straight flush.

BP: Boy.

RTB: Boy, was right.

BP: Boy, was right. [laughs] A straight flush. Holy smoke!

00:11:28

RTB: Three cards. Well, I—of course, I was broke. So I got up from the table and the Chinese military man came over and he said, "If you want to, I'll—if you want to sign a deal, I'll give you some more money." [unintelligible 00:12:04] And I could see something was wrong, but I didn't know what. So that was the end of that.

BP: I'll be darned.

RTB: But she really—

BP: A straight flush.

RTB: How she could—when it came up to those cards like that—I don't know. But I watched her close.

BP: She must have been—

RTB: I watched everybody at the table.

BP: Must have been a wizard.

RTB: Then we go on from there. We go on. And back—we get on a little—a boat, actually, and went by boat down the river to where our camp was, our base. And it took about two days to get down there. And on the way down, the head of the guerilla force said, “Now, please don't talk at all about where you were or how you got out or anything else to anybody, because there's a man we helped out before. And he talked and those three villages were burned to the ground.”

BP: Holy smoke.

RTB: And the word got back to the Japanese that they had—and so he said, “If this happens again, we'll just have—going to have quit doing this.” And so on and so forth.

BP: Yeah, I can see it. Yeah, boy.

00:14:19

[Back to the United States]

RTB: And so we got back. And Chennault happened to be up in that area in his C-47, so he took me back to his headquarters and I flew on back to the United States. And went to the—

BP: Roughly what month was that in '44?

RTB: In '44, I was—see, I was shot down on—in the middle of April.

BP: Middle of April.

RTB: And so I got out—well, it was almost July before I got back to the States.

BP: I'll be darned. In '44?

RTB: Yeah. And—

BP: Where'd they fly you back to?

RTB: They flew us, uh—

BP: Travis?

RTB: No. We—San Francisco. And we—and then I was sent to—I was sent to an Air Force hospital.

00:15:45

BP: Can't remember the name of that hospital? It wasn't in San Francisco, was it?

RTB: No. And anyway, there was a real fine orthopedic surgeon there, and he looked at my arm. He said, "Well..." He says—I told him the story about the Chinese doctor. He says, "If that Chinese doctor hadn't done for you what he did, you probably would have lost your arm. They would have had to amputate it or you'd have died of gangrene."

BP: Holy smokes.

RTB: And then he said, "That doctor did exactly the same thing as we would have done here, except we would have wrapped it with wet towels and put heating pads on." Well, he said—which is just as effective, what he did. And he said, "You can thank him that you've got—that you're alive."

BP: I'll be darned.

RTB: So [unintelligible 00:16:45] wasn't bad from a Chinese doctor.

BP: Pretty effective guy, I'd say.

RTB: And so they operated on my arm, and I got back on flying status.

BP: How's your ankle? Did it heal up pretty well?

RTB: Oh, it healed up all right.

BP: Yeah, yeah.

RTB: It was just cracked. It wasn't—nothing was wrong with it except the soreness in it.

00:17:13

BP: Yeah. Boy, you're lucky when you bailed out you didn't hit your head or something when you hit the tail. Good lord.

RTB: Yeah. And I was so close to the ground. Incredible, yes.

BP: You were—because lots of time—weren't—wouldn't generally, you'd roll over on your back and push the stick forward to get out? Or you just jumped right out?

RTB: That was one way that they said to get out. Another way was to slow up real slow, slow as you could, and then slide off the wing.

BP: Yeah.

RTB: But I didn't have time to—

BP: Oh, hell no. A thousand feet. You'd save your—

RTB: Well, uh—

BP: Roughly, what—

RTB: And I don't remember pulling the ripcord, but I evidently had it in my hand, and when I hit my arm [unintelligible 00:18:02] jerk—

BP: Gave it a jerk. Well, you're damn lucky the chute didn't hit the tail, too, you know? I mean, everything there was—well, you were just very fortunate.

RTB: Yes, I was.

BP: Boy.

00:18:16

RTB: I had somebody looking down after me.

BP: I should say so. The angels were hovering around you, weren't they, Rex?

RTB: Yes.

BP: Yeah.

RTB: Well, see, all I had to do was rollover that guy and go out with him—

BP: Yeah.

RTB: ...instead of chasing them—

BP: Chasing them straight up, which is a deathtrap.

RTB: Just dumb as can be.

BP: Yeah. Well, of course, when you get in the heat of battle, well, you do some crazy things. What—

00:18:50

RTB: Well, you get mad—

BP: Yeah, damn right.

RTB: ...and that's something you never can do.

BP: Now, did your—did the squadron—they heard that you were alive. And when you got back—or they'd—how'd they—did they have you captured? Or what did they do?

RTB: They—well, no. Well, see, the guerillas have a radio.

BP: Oh, I see. Okay. They got—

RTB: And they wired in that I was with them. Now, my folks were notified by the government that I had been lost in combat.

BP: Hm-hmm [affirmative].

RTB: And then they were re-notified that I was alive.

BP: Hm-hmm [affirmative].

00:19:45

[Assignment to the 29th Fighter Squadron]

RTB: Then I was assigned then to the—I got back on flying status. I got my arm back [unintelligible 00:19:56] and I was sent to the 29th Squadron and that was the outfit. That group was getting the—doing a lot of production. Not production test work, but military test work on the F-80.

BP: Oh, yeah, the F-80. Yeah, that would—but where was that base? Do you remember? Back east or on the west...?

RTB: No, no.

BP: West Coast?

RTB: Yeah.

BP: Yeah.

00:20:30

RTB: And then we were—when we—when they were ready to start to equip us with the F-80, we went to March Field.

BP: Yeah, March. Yeah, okay.

RTB: And flew out of March Field.

BP: Okay.

00:20:48

[End Side B]

[END OF INTERVIEW]