

Eric Walz History 300 Collection

Clayton Allan – Life During WWII

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Oral Interview conducted by Aaron Clegg

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AC: What role did you play in World War II?

CA: I was a Marine Pilot, I flew course airs. There's some pictures of the group that started flying the course airs in Jacksonville Florida. We flew as a combat team, there was five second Aleutians and I Major. This guy is a major he was an Indianapolis graduate he went through Indianapolis and he is a United States Marine Core Major the rest of us are reserves. This was the Captain Schaffer, and he took us through our training program at Jacksonville, Florida and then were all sent from there to the west coast to El Torah, California where we went through operational training at Jacksonville, Florida as this group and then we were all transferred to El Torah together and we flew together at El Torah and then 1 April 1945 we were broke up, they decided they didn't want us flying together; be too much of a strain on you if one of you got lost, and while we were at El Torah we did lose one of the boys, Stanley de Priest went up in a plane one day, he and I flew together as wingmen and we went out one day and he didn't come back, we found out later that the plane he had been flying had been grounded by the pilot that flew before him, intact for three days it had been grounded after it had been flown with gas fumes in the cockpit, we figured the gas fumes got the better of him and we were making runs on a target and he flew into the ground and at that time around the 1 April they split us all up and we went different directions over seas. I went from there to San Diego and ship out with a about, I imagine close to 2,000 other people, that were all being transferred over various positions in the Navy and Marine Core and we left San Diego on the Bonhomie resard which is a brand new aircraft carrier and it was one of the Essectic Class carriers and they were the biggest carriers that we had during World War II and it took us six days to get from San Diego to Pearl, and then I was in a squadron there, it was a squadron that was used for replacement pilots for the squadrons over seas when the men over seas where over for ten months why they were rotated back to the United States. When a rotation would be made why they would pull pilots out of this squadron at Pearl Harbor and take their place in the squadron that they were in. I got to, when I got my orders to move out into the squadrons, we got on a transport plane and there was eight of us that got on the plane and we flew down from Pearl to Palmyra, from Palmyra over to Canton and from Canton up to Winnetka and from Winnetka to Guam and Guam was a staging center at that time, United States had that Island secured, it's a big island and they were flying B-29's off that Island and it was a replacement area, they had new planes and everything there when we lost several planes during the invasion of Okinawa and of course the invasion of Hiroshima which was a head of the invasion of Okinawa, they used Guam as a staging area to hold and have in reserved planes as they needed them. The eight of us got to Guam and we each got a plane and flew from there to Hiroshima, because we couldn't make it to Okinawa on one load of gas in the plane, we refuel at Iwo Jima, we were there over night and at that time they were still, they had Iwo secured, but they were still getting Japs out of the caves. I arrived on Okinawa on the 6 of May and I was their front then until the 21 of June, which was about the time the island was secured during that time I flew cover most of the time, we flew cover for ships out in the ocean they called radar picket ships. And these are flights that I ended up, whenever you had a cap on it why that was combat air patrol over a, that's what we did most of, other times we

went out, they weren't caps they were just out of target of opportunities, we flew our jobs was to fly cover over these picket ships, that the Kamikaze were coming down. There was nineteen of them, around Okinawa spaced about hundred miles apart all around the island and their purpose was to warn a head of time, give the island a warning when the Japs would send down planes and couple of times they sent down groups that were trying to get back on the island in the parts that we had already secured and we flew cover for them and we flew also close air support for the Marines down on the front lines the ground Marines and ground Army that was trying to take the island and our job was to fly, they were in caves we would fly with the napalm tanks and the napalm tanks were actually fire bombs and we flew a lot of those missions. But generally speaking we flew air patrol we go out and spend three hours flying around these picket ships and each one had a call number and they would assign you, before you left Okinawa, a ground air patrol unit would assign you which one of the picket ships you were to go out to and they all had numbers and we knew where they were from the numbers and then we would go out and fly cover over them of fly protection over them in case, out the nineteen of them they lost thirteen got hit with kamikazes were sunk, curse they would be replaced when they were sunk. It was our job to keep the kamikazes off of them that was our main purpose up till we secured the island, then after we secured the island they had two B-25 squadrons on the island, they were twin engine bomber and they made raids up over Kyushu and at that time we flew cover and support over the bombers to protect them from the Japs up over Kyushu and I was on Okinawa from the 6 of May until late in November and that was my experience over seas. I went from Okinawa to Midway that was quite interesting. This is we traveled home, we flew from Okinawa to Midway on a Jeep Carrier or small carrier and we were at Midway for three or four weeks and then we were picked up by a plane and taken to Pearl and then we went home on the battleship Colorado. This is the barracks at Midway, Midway was really during the first of the war really took a terrible beating, but by the time that I got there it was near the end of the war and they had rebuilt all these barracks and this was where we lived were in this barracks while we were there, it wasn't a very big island, in fact it was a real small one. While we were on Okinawa when I first landed there why, the Japs had five inch naval guns in the caves mounted on railroad tracks and the used Okinawa for a training place for the Japs did, and the pretty well had these guns set up so they could hit about any place on the island they wanted to shoot and lots of times they would lay three or four shells, usually two or three shells right down the runway and out battleships out in the ocean surrounding Okinawa, they could get two shots off and then the battle ships would fire on them and close the caves up, they would roll the guns back, they knew how much time they had before a battle ship would fire on them, they would make two quick shots and then they would roll these guns back into the caves and the battleships would know where they were firing from, they had a firing point. They roll the guns back in and the shot a couple shells over the two air strips, then they would pull the guns back and the battleship would close the caves up. You would know a shell was coming in you would hear it and then better get for cover. We had a camp close to tomb, a Japanese tomb and of course they were empty, they had to be because we went them, whenever they start lobbing shells on us, we head into one of them for protection.

AC: Did you come home before they dropped the Bomb?

CA: No, after the 21 of June till late August we were flying cover on the bombers who were going into Kyushu and dropping bombs on Kyushu and then 6 November, somewhere on in there we dropped the first bomb on Hiroshima and then two or three days later they dropped the second on Nagasaki and that ended the war and we had a transport plane that we had access to in the squadron after the war was ended we flew up and we did landed in a field in Kyushu and why we were there Nagasaki was on the island of Kyushu where they dropped the second bomb and we circle around it and it was a big hole in the ground, it was kind of in a little valley and imagine it was about five or six miles across and there was a bay there where they did a lot of shipping out of and the hills all around it, just like a bowl where they dropped the bomb and it was just, you can't imagine the devastation. The only thing left standing of Nagasaki was a few cement pillars that were sticking up, look like a building, big cement pillars down on the docks that was all that was left of it. The sides of the mountains were burned rust color.

AC: How did you feel when President Roosevelt came on the radio announcing that Pearl Harbor was attack on December 7, 1941?

CA: I remember very well the day, Sunday morning that Pearl Harbor was hit there was five of us that was going to college we were freshmen in college we were living in Logan in an apartment five guys my age and it was my turn to wash the dishes that day and I was standing at the sink washing dishes when it came over the radio that Pearl Harbor had been hit and that was in December, I had finished that year as a freshman and lot of the boys were being drafted and lot of them were enlisting and in July or August I enlisted on a prevision enlistment I had to have an operation before they would accept me in the Navy V-5 program, but I enlisted on 31 August of 1942 and then from then on in December of that year I started flying down in Fillmore, Utah in what they call the Civilian Pilot Training, I was there three months, December till March and then in March I went to the University of Utah and what they call Secondary Civilian Pilot Training, we didn't have uniform or anything we were just civilians, but they had a service flight instructor and that was secondary, I got fourteen hours there, how they log what you do this was the fifth lesson in A and there was four A, B, C, D, phases of secondary pilot training, they would grade you on what you did, each day, for three months I was the University of Utah and then I left there in September they sent us all home from Secondary and it took them about a month or month and half we were just waiting to be called to active duty in the service. I got my call at Preflight school and Del Monty which is in Monterrey, California and that was all physical and book work there was no flying or anything there, that was three months of dog gone tough callosities and learn to do navigation and learn weather, learn how to recognize all the planes of the enemy, both German and Japanese we had to recognize with a blink of an eye what you were looking at. Then at the end of that time, I was sent to Hutchinson, Kansas or Primary training and that took about three months and then form there I went to, that put us in close to the

end of 1943 and then I was shipped from Hutchinson, Kansas. I had log book here, which is primary training, we had uniforms and everything else and at that time I was a navy Cadet and from Hutchinson, Kansas, I went Corpus Crystal, Texas, I was there six months and we flew training planes there. I was there for six months till 31 May 1944, as we got through the basic training, we went through instrument training and I went to advance training in Kingsville, Texas, as I got out of that I was commissioned a second lieutenant. From there I went to Jacksonville, Florida and when I got to Jacksonville, Florida that when I got with this group and flew together all the time until I went overseas. That was a good experience, I got a real good education out of it and I wouldn't want to do it again, but I wouldn't trade for anything in the world.

AC: How did your religion help you, during the War during your flights?

CA: Well they didn't have religion by denomination we were all protestant even though I was LDS that is what I had on all my records why our religion was protestant was just we had a service pastor and we had every Sunday going in the service we had church. There was times over seas when I felt like my religion was a great help to me, there's times when I was in difficult positions and I think the Lord had a lot to do with me getting out of, as far as front lines fighting and that I was always flying off an air field. I did on Okinawa I had a kid that grew up with and I knew he was in a battalion there on Okinawa and I was able to look him up and he was down on the front lines, I went down there one day to visit him and I was darn glad to head back. Right close to the front lines and there was 105 gun battalion was back must have been a mile or two back on the island from him, he was pretty much on the front line, because his job was a heck of a job they had these big open tanks like machine they called them amphibious tanks and his job was to go down and bring out the wounded and the dead when they had a fight, that would have been a heck of a job, and on the other hand when I go down there, they knew that I was flying course air support for the front line down there, they didn't want any part of my job, we were all where we wanted to be.