

Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
TOM A. GRIMM  
Bombardier/Navigator, Air Force, World War II & Korean War  
1995

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**Grimm, Tom A.**, (b.1917). Oral History Interview, 1995.

User Copy : 2 sound cassettes (ca. 100 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy : 1 sound cassette (ca. 100 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Transcript : 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Military Papers : 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

### **Abstract**

Grimm, a native of Cassville (Wisconsin), discusses his World War II service as a U.S. Army Air Corps instructor and Korean War service as a bombardier with the 452<sup>nd</sup> Bomb Group. He mentions what he was doing when Pearl Harbor was bombed and talks about using an Elks refresher course to get into the Air Corps. Grimm mentions being sworn in as an unassigned private before being sworn in as a navigation cadet and going to Kelly Hill for basic training. He describes basic training at Kelly Hill, primary at Corsicana and mentions bombardier cadet training at Lincoln Field. Grimm talks of how he was assigned to be an instructor at Childress Air Force Base from April 1943 to May 1945. He speaks of his assignment with the “colored squadrons” and his responsibilities. Grimm recounts several inventory shortage problems he encountered and a \$10,000 portable x-ray machine he found. Following World War II, Grimm sold roofing material and repaired watches before being called up for the Korean War. He was sworn in as a captain at Brooks Field and volunteered for B-26 service. Grimm was assigned to the 452<sup>nd</sup> Bomb Group and flew 55 missions in Korea. He describes using the SHORAN (Short Range Navigation) system on bombing missions and the interior of the B-26. Grimm talks about one mission where they encountered a lot of flak and some of the food at Pusan (Korea). He completed his tour in six months and describes returning to Tucson (Texas) to fly B-50s. Grimm talks about back problems, attempts to get into photography school, and being told in November that he was supposed to have been out of the service in July. Grimm talks about getting a job as a technical illustrator with Temco in Texas. He concludes the interview mentioning he never joined veterans organizations and talking about his family.

### **Biographical Sketch**

Grimm (b.1917) served as an Air Corps instructor at Childress (Texas) during World War II and with 728<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 452<sup>nd</sup> Bomb Group during the Korean War before being discharged in 1952.

Interviewed by Mark Van Ells, 1995.

Transcribed by Georgia Hale (WDVA Staff), 1999.

Transcription edited by Jim Irwin & John McNally, 2007.

**Transcribed Interview:**

Mark: Today's date is December 1, 1995. This is Mark Van Ells, Archivist for the Wisconsin Veterans Museum. I am doing an oral history interview by telephone this morning with Mr. Tom Grimm, originally from Cassville, Wisconsin. Presently he is a resident of the great state of Texas. Good morning and thanks for taking the time out of your schedule to talk to me today.

Grimm: It's good to be here doing the answering I guess.

Mark: I appreciate it. Well, I suppose we should start at the top as they say. Why don't you tell me a little bit about where you were born and raised and what you were doing prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941.

Grimm: Well, I was born in Cassville, Wisconsin the 17<sup>th</sup> of March, 1917. My dad ran a store there and my mother kept house and whatnot. There weren't many jobs in the area at that time. I worked whenever I could, doing just about anything that came along.

Mark: During the Depression you mean?

Grimm: Yes. I got out of high school in '35. I had worked at a canning factory in Cassville which was the only, well, you could call it industry, the only thing there that had any money behind it. I planted cabbages as a kid for 10, 12 cents an hour, which was the hardest work I have ever done in my life. Then as I got older, why I could plant. At first I was dropping cabbages, the plants until I got old enough to go to work in the canning factory itself which was corn, peas, and cabbage plant. I did that and any job I could find. That was it.

Mark: So, when the attack on Pearl Harbor occurred where were you and do you remember the incident or hearing about it?

Grimm: I was working in a filling station in Cassville and I had started, well, three of us from Cassville had started going to an Elks refresher course in Dubuque, Iowa. At least twice a week we went. It was about forty miles from Cassville. The Elks had sponsored this and the instructors came from Lora's College from down there. What they were trying to do was to educate us enough so we could take the equivalent job exam and pass for pilot training and any of the other positions that were needed in the Air Force. Prior to this I had seriously considered going to Canada and joining the Canadian Air Force.

Mark: For what reason were you considering that?

Grimm: There was nothing for the younger people in Cassville, nothing whatsoever. At that period of time, I don't know what caused it or anything but I had just one boil after another. Nobody could do anything for me. I suffered mentally, anything you want to say, I went through everything. I was convinced that the only way I could ever get

ahead any place was to get out of Cassville. That doesn't sound too good for the local people and whatnot but there just wasn't any jobs or money. But I was afraid to go up there and join because of the boils, might cause me to be eliminated from pilot training which is what I was thinking of. So, I just waited around for the draft. That is what it amounted to. Then the Elks offered this refresher course and if you could take and pass the equivalent examination for two years of college, the Air Force, or Air Corps at that time, would accept you. If you meet the physical qualifications and such. So, the three of us started, I think it was the 1st of October, 1941, to take this course. We drove down at least twice a week, sometimes it was three, and one time I remember four classes. Then that was about it until I was working in the filling station and they cut in and announced that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor. I did know where Pearl Harbor was but that was about all. All I could think of was now they will lower the requirements so that I could get in and learn to be a pilot, although it didn't turn out that way, that was my goal at that time.

Mark: I'm interested in why you were so set on the Air Force and on flying? This is always interesting to me. I mean there were many service options but you seemed pretty determined to get into the Air Force in some way. What is it that attracted you to the Air Force?

Grimm: Well, I had always been interested in flying. I flew every chance I had. You know, little planes came in and offered rides and what not. I always scrounged up money to get at least one ride. So it was the Air Force in the back of my mind, or the Air Corps, all the way. I never considered the Navy at that time. I did consider the Marines the Navy, and they were to a great extent. It was the Air Corps only I don't really recall having any serious thoughts about anything else. I didn't really understand at the time what bombardier or navigation was, it was pilot only, that was it.

Mark: So, after Pearl Harbor, why don't you describe the steps of going into the military? Who did you go to talk to and what did they tell you and where did you go off to training?

Grimm: Well, the Elks offering this course kept in contact with the enlistment officers, I guess you would say, in Des Moines. Maybe they had an agreement, I don't know. There were corps areas at the time and I do believe that Wisconsin was in the 6<sup>th</sup> Corps Area or the 7<sup>th</sup> Corps Area. We heard that we were taking or giving exams in Rockford, Illinois. The three of us drove down on Sunday and Monday we went to take the exam in the other Corps Area. I just don't remember which was which but the other two fellows, they passed. I couldn't line up the little sticks for the depth perception. Why, I don't know. I don't know to this day, but I couldn't do it. But the captain that was medical officer he did give me a slip saying in six month's time I could come back. I knew that by then I would be drafted. As soon as we finished, the other two fellows passed, we came back to Dubuque, Iowa because it was a class night. It was Monday, it was a school night. We got there and they said we are going to Cedar Rapids the next day to take our physicals. They provided all the bus transportation

and whatnot. And for me to forget that I had been in the other Corps Area and had taken this exam and flunked it. We went to Cedar Rapids and all three of us passed. There was no trouble whatsoever. I don't know what was the matter with my eyes that day! So, then we came back and we still had classes only as a, why, I don't know, we just didn't have real out-and-out classes. They were mainly concerned with math. That seemed to be the main requirement in this two-year college deal. We would go to classes but they didn't amount to too much and then they finally said now, tomorrow we will go to Des Moines and we will take the mental part of the test and if you pass that, then you will be sworn in. We went over and took the exam and I don't know, how many were there, quite a few from the Dubuque area, and us three from Cassville. We all passed that I know of, but they didn't have room for us at the training schools so we were sworn in as privates, unassigned, and sent back home. That way the draft couldn't touch us and they had us for the training as soon as there was room. So, we came home, and we got \$21.00 a month plus assistance for being already sworn into the service, and that was the 27<sup>th</sup> or so of March. We just had to wait at home. And finally that was the 27<sup>th</sup> of March of '42 that I was sworn into the service. My serial number was 17065362. We just had to wait for our call. I finally got a call and I was called into Des Moines, and I was sworn in as a navigation cadet and then I was making \$75.00 a month, and that was on the 19<sup>th</sup> of May in 1942. We were then sent to Texas on the train. I got down to San Antonio on the 21<sup>st</sup> of May. We were put in barracks down on Kelly Field. I don't know if you know anything about the Air Force or the...

Mark: I was in the Air Force actually.

Grimm: Okay. On top of this hill right behind Kelly was what was known as The Hill at that time; now it is known as Lackland but then it was called The Hill. We got our haircut and uniforms and whatnot, then we were sent over to Brooks Field and confined us there for the weekend. Monday we were brought back to The Hill and assigned barracks and we started our training.

Mark: That consisted of what? Were you in the classroom a lot? Did they march you around and that sort of thing?

Grimm: Well, they didn't have enough people to send us out under, let's say, noncoms and to teach us basics. But we had quite a few enlisted men with us. Well, several of them were sergeants that had signed up to be trained as pilots. There was such a thing as a flying sergeant at that time but these fellows were just enlisted men that had obtained the rank of sergeant. There were a few corporal and whatnot but, in general, they were sergeants. They taught us our basic training and it was, oh, I don't know, I haven't run into any other. But you hear the stories and the movies and whatnot about what a bunch of tough cookies they were, that were there teaching the raw recruits military saluting and the marching and all this and that. We didn't run into that. It was the buddy, buddy system. I think that we learned it quicker that way than the other way but that is just my opinion. We didn't have any trouble. I did catch KP or latrine duty one time and that was the only time that I caught any of those details. I

remember while we were working there was a flight of P-39s came in over The Hill to land down at Kelly Field. Man that was a thrill! I didn't know then what a lemon they were but they really gave me a boot, I really enjoyed seeing it. So, while we were there the buildings all surrounded a great big drill field as we called it. On this field there were rocks six inches in diameter and some larger than that. That's where we did our marching and whatnot. Part of each day was spent picking up all these rocks and throwing them into the bed of a truck and then they were hauled away. I didn't see Lackland for years after I left there but when I went back it was a beautiful green field but at that time it was anything but. We did an awful lot of PT because so many of the fellows were in such bad shape physically. We played flag football or touch football for the most part. Those rocks were rough to run in, and to fall on, and whatnot I could run. I could always run. I never smoked or drank and I was in real good shape. I was older than most of them, I was twenty-five when I went in the service. Because I could run, they drafted me, I guess you'd say, to start training for the field day against the Navy down in Corpus Christi. So, every day while the rest of them stood retreat and whatnot over there and picked up rocks because that was a long session of our running, we would go over to a field that had a track laid out on it and we would run. So, I got out of all of that. Then on Saturday we did have parades and such as that. I kept my hand in on the marching and whatnot. I never had any trouble with it though I never liked to get out and drill the troops myself. That was something I just didn't care for and I still don't. I still don't feel that I should have done that. But anyway on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July we were to go to Corpus Christi and to this meet. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of July I was on a train going to Corsicana for primary. I had placed in the exams. First choice that I gave was for pilot. Then, at that time, you took these exams on the basis of what you had made you were qualified as pilot, or navigator, or bombardier. I placed pilot, bombardier, navigator. I was weak on math so I'm sure that is part of why I didn't get navigation. I went to Corsicana and started soloing. I was in town on Sunday afternoon and I don't know what I was leaned against on the building, with my left foot behind me against the building and there was an awful burning sensation on the inside of my left foot. It was real painful and I thought it was another one of those boils. Now, they had slowed down so that they didn't bother me. While I was at Cassville I had seven at one time on my chin so I just figured it was just another boil coming up. I had to go on sick call the next morning and they shoved me into the hospital. I was in the hospital for I guess three weeks and nothing really developed but it was all inflamed. So, they lanced it and couldn't get anything out of it, was maybe the head of a pin infection in it. Two to three days later, why, the flight surgeon cut into it again and still didn't get anything. When it healed they put me back on flying status. I went out and started to fly again and came down with pneumonia, they called it viral pneumonia. Well, sulfur was just out and they put a bit of sulfur down me and, why, a week later I was back on duty. But I was so far behind my class that I couldn't catch up. They didn't offer me a chance to go back to classes. But I was behind anyway in the flying and so, anyway, I was eliminated. But out of thirteen of us sitting at the washout board that morning at Corsicana I was the only one that got further Air Corps training. The rest of them went back to whatever they had happened to have been doing before they came in. If they were raw recruits, they went back and started over. I went to Lincoln Field as

bombardier cadet. We got into the same setup down there, very few instructors. Now, Corsicana was a college, it was a real nice place with nice barracks and everything else. They weren't barracks, they were out-an-out rooms. I got to Wellington Field and we had barracks and they were unfinished. There was only a few sidewalks and, in general, they were all just muddy paths. We didn't have any duties at all so we played mostly touch football all day long, wherever we could find a dry spot or some grass. My TAC officer down there was, your not old enough to remember him but Roscoe Ates, he was a stuttering comedian.

Mark: Nope, don't remember him.

Grimm: Well, he was in the movies. He stuttered, that was his deal in the movies. Well, he didn't stutter when he was, I think he was a captain when I got there, but he got his major before I left. He was the best TAC officer that I ever had. He knew his business, he knew what he was doing and I said then, and I still do, he was the best TAC officer I ever had. So, we got our training down there. There was some marching and whatnot down there but very little. There just wasn't room for it. Then I got hurt playing football and put in the hospital again. When I got out there was no, now I was in 43A, in pilot training. I went 143-4 in bombardier training. The pilots were numerical and lettered A, B, C and whatnot. The bombardiers weren't, I don't know a thing about the navigation. I was in 143-4 down there and there was no openings in the bombardier schools so, they let me go home for a couple of weeks. It was in the middle of winter, on leave, because I hadn't been home for quite some time. When I came back, why, the 143-4 and 143-5 had been shipped out. I had been in 143-6 so finally I was shipped to, the first part of the year of '43, to Midland and I got my bombardier training there. We had been in school and finally at Wellington Field they started us in ground school. Then I went to Midland for advanced training and I got my commission the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April in 1943. I was shipped immediately to Childress, Texas and was an instructor up there. The story was at that time, six months as an instructor and you would be on your way overseas. Now, I don't think any of us were wanting to get shot at or anything but we went into the service to serve a purpose and I couldn't see an instructor doing much. I still, to a great extent, feel that way though I know no one was shooting at me. At the end of about eight months I went down and asked a major, "How long do I have to stay here before I can be shipped out?" With a very cold look and he said, "Lieutenant Grimm, you're an instructor, end of interview." That was it. So, I stayed at Childress as an instructor till May of '45. The only way I got out of that was because orders from Washington said that if anybody hadn't been overseas, they should be on their way. So, I went to Las Vegas for B-29 gunnery. We had to have that with the new system that they had, in the B-29 of all the different stations. I had been in the hospital several times while I was at Childress. The boils acted up a couple of times and put me into the hospital. So, I went to Vegas, and Saturday before we were to start school, I helped an old boy wash his car. I scratched my little left pinky and I got blood poisoning so they put me in the hospital again. I got out but I could work only three or four days. I could go back one class and be with fellows that I didn't know or I could wait two classes and be with another bunch that came in out of Childress. So, I went back two classes and

then I went to Las Angeles for the first time and had a few days to myself. We got done, I think it was five days after the war ended. I wanted to stay in. I didn't know what I was going to do when I got out. I was in student status and they couldn't do anything with me. I volunteered for jobs and so I was number one on the sucker list. So they made a job for me if I could get along with the CO, everything. They needed help real bad. The CO was Major Bonnell and he was with the colored squadrons. They were all separated or segregated at that time. I went down there. Major Bonnell was white. Of course, they had to have a white officer over them and Lieutenant Pagjoe. Bonnell and I hit it off 100%. Pagjoe and I were friends but he was stickler for rules and regulations. So, they put me in there as a PT instructor, as supply officer over supply. I had to eat at least two meals per day in the mess. They had their own mess. They had their own MPs. They were completely segregated. I took the baseball team to ball games. We would fly to Tucson or to a Tuskegee. We got to Tuskegee our airplane went down with the prop governor down on the number four engine out, so we were stuck there for a week. I still wasn't anything but in student status. I had about three-quarters, maybe a little more than that, of the all the building that I was assigned for. I was PT officer, supply officer, I checked the mess at the colored squadrons, I ran the projector at the local theater. They then made me theater officer so I could sign the checks and whatnot. We had an ex-bombardier that had reverted back to enlisted status. He was running it and, of course, he wasn't an officer. He couldn't sign all the paperwork so they promoted me up there. Then they called me into headquarters one day and said we can't do this legally. Would you like to elect to stay in for awhile? We are working on your permanent status for the field here instead of student status. You are going to become the head of the hospital here. I had a Major Burnaby there and three enlisted men and that was all. They did have a few nurses. But the nurses were getting out, I think, within two weeks all the nurses would be gone. They had, had a man there as the supply officer that had committed suicide. They had records of five marriages, only three divorces. He had a young girl in trouble in town and paperwork from my 201 file, \$1260.00 some odd missing from the flying kit in the B-24. Well, I don't know the reason behind it or anything but they were missing and he was blamed for it. There were a lot of shortages in supplies including, one thing was a \$10,000 portable x-ray machine. They were having nothing but trouble and trying to get these records straightened up. Three women working and they would answer to me. The first day up there they gave me the keys and said just go around and walk through these buildings and see what you have got to do and what we got to do for you to get an idea. The first building that I opened and walked in the portable x-ray machine set right there on the side ramp so they could slide things in and out off of the trucks. The portable x-ray machine had sat right there and they had missed it. Well, I was a hero immediately. I found three or four other things within the next few days. That cleared these records up considerably.

**[End of Side A, Tape 1]**

So I had, and, oh, because I was a bombardier they checked me out as a flight...oh, what did they call that? All I did, all the B-24s were gone by this time. We had



several B-25s there and some AT-6s at that time. The 25s, every flight that was made in them, they had to have me fly with them. What was the term that they used? Oh, the flight-engineer. All I did was stand between the two pilots and turn the inverters on and off. They had to get up out of their seat to do that and that is all I did, but that was required. As a result, every weekend the fellows that were still there wanted to go on R&Rs and they had to have someone with them and I was the only one there so they were fighting over me. So I got a lot of flights around all over the country on these weekend flights. Little by little they were trying to get a medical supply officer in there and little by little we found him. Of course, everybody was trying to get out. I was best man for a P-47 pilot that had gotten out of 47s and shipped to Vegas some way. How, I don't know, and I was his best man at his wedding. He married a little Red Cross girl that was stationed at the field. He was going to stay in the service and he was first lieutenant at the time. They talked him into taking over the squadron, the flight line, supply, and whatnot, flying clothes, and parachutes and the like. They assured him, the big shots over the whole area, assured him that everything was there and everything was fine and dandy. He could sign without having to run an inventory, which was bad. But it was so hectic those days. If you lived through that, you would understand why they did that. Well, he signed for it and the next day or so, why, some general of some kind, whatever he was, came in with his squad and they proceeded to run their own inventory. Man he was short! And they were fixing to court-martial him! One of the wings of the hospital—I had never been in there—there was a funny, funny odor as you walked by the hall. And the door, it was all closed and locked but there was a funny odor there. For some reason, I had been through everything else, I went in there one day and I opened the door and stepped in and there were great big cardboard boxes, about 4'x4'x4' sealed, but that odor was just overpowering. I ripped one of them open and it was full of flying clothes, blood, guts, and whatnot, parachutes and everything else that they had taken off of crash victims. They put them in there and sealed them and that was it. I went back to the office and called this fellow and, his name was, well, Rocky Roads. I don't know his first name any more. I called Rocky and I said, "I think I have your shortages." He got cleared and they cleared everything on his inventory that he had signed. He was a lieutenant colonel, living in Michigan the last I heard of him. He married this little Red Cross girl and I was his best man at his wedding. I made my last flight as an Air Corps officer in a T-6 and then I got out of the service, and they finally discharged me, and I got out in January of '47. I stayed till then. Then I didn't stay active after I got out of the service. I learned to do watch repair work and I wanted to move back to Texas. When I got out I went back to Cassville and I had a return trip ticket to Las Vegas to go to work for my old CO in a warehouse he was going to build. I was going to leave, let's say this coming Wednesday. Sunday night my brother came in and said I got a job, that I don't know quite what he was doing, working in a bank and selling insurance. He said, "It's a pretty good job and you like to drive and to travel so, you're on the road all the time." Well, I knew I wasn't a salesman, but I took the job and it was selling roofing material. I worked Minnesota and Michigan. We would have meetings in Chicago and I kept yelling I wanted to go back to Texas. So, they said, "If you want to go back to Texas, we are going to open up the territory and you can go down there and have a job." All I was doing up there was going around

and making contacts. You would drive a few miles and you would be in the next town. If I made a contact and someone said, “Yeah, we will talk to your boss. Have him come in on such a such day” and he would go in and make the sale, hopefully. So I came back to Texas and I worked with a fellow out of San Antonio. We would drive fifty miles to the next town, or less. Up there, down here you could drive 150. I soon found out that there were a lot of things going on. They were selling the same material under different names and you were supposed to have an exclusive franchise you agreed to and you had to sign a contract and all that. The old boy that I was working with, he wasn’t selling anything and it was my fault and it might have been. If I talked to people and they said bring him in, it was all I was required to do. So, when I found out that they were selling at least five items, maybe seven, under different names, I talked to an old boy on the beach at Corpus Christi one day. I was having them over the weekend to put in a new motor in my, no, it was a crankshaft in a Hudson that I had bought in Minnesota. He convinced me I ought to go to school to learn to be a watch repairman. I was always handy with stuff and my fingers and whatnot. I gave the company three weeks notice and I went to Comanche and I went to watch repair school.

Mark: Now, this school, was that covered by the GI Bill?

Grimm: Yeah, that was a GI Bill. I started in May, in the first part of July. I went to the nearby town of Gorman. And I had a pickup station up there and a drug store. I would pick up watches and bring them back and the instructors at school would help me tend to them and whatnot. I was doing pretty well and they only gave me one year of training and that was it. So, at the end of the year I didn’t know what I was going to do but I was going to move on. It was a little town and I like little towns and all but I didn’t know what I was going to do for sure. The old boy that ran the place, he offered me a job working for him when I wasn’t working on watches. There was quite a bit of oil play at the time so there was quite a bit of money floating around. Of course, that’s peanut country. There was a good crop the year before and there was money around. So, I went to work for him. And I decided that I’m not a businessman and I knew it for sure. I tried to get back into the service. Then Korea came along and I was called up.

Mark: I would like to go into Korea but I would like to go back to one thing first. I am interested in why Texas attracted you so much?

Grimm: Other than being convinced I had to get out of Cassville. Now, I had friends there and this and that and all the other things. I just had no future there as far as I was concerned. I had no, say, intention to go back there. And some of the friends of mine, when I got home in January I went over into Indiana and Ohio with friends and they were polishing rocks and making rings and things. Like I said, I was handy with my fingers. I did consider that but I couldn’t find a school anyplace. The school they had gone to—there were three of them—the schools they had gone to had closed its doors. Well, I had a girl I was interested in down here in Corsicana and I wanted to come back down. I did and that so-called romance didn’t work out. I went to

Comanche and had lots of friends there and I got to do a lot of hunting and that was very interesting. So then, I got to Gorman and got in with a bunch up there. And I love baseball, I got started in softball at Comanche. I came to Gorman and there was a softball team there and I got on it right away. Then they started, hardball baseball is what I always called it, so I then played baseball with different teams but we were in what they called Brazos' Team. That's a big river down here. We got into that and one of the teams had some connection with the old Fort Worth Cats. That was a team I believe connected with the Brooklyn Dodgers at that time. Anyway, I got to play a lot of baseball and hunted and good friends and whatnot. So, that was it. I liked the people, I liked the country, I was just interested in it. That's all I can say.

Mark: Okay. As for Korea now, you were recalled into the service in 1951?

Grimm: Yeah.

Mark: Now, the war had been going on for, geez, a year before that probably?

Grimm: Yes, I was probably a year trying to get in. They had shipped my records around here, there and elsewhere because I moved from Wisconsin down to here. They had trouble getting all of my records together. I think they finally found them over at Maxwell Field over in Alabama I believe it was. It was the North Korea invading the South Korea that brought it to a head. And as I said, I didn't keep active, I didn't do any flying or anything in the service. In between I got my pilot's license and that was under the GI Bill too. But I think they were glad for warm bodies at that time, is what it amounted to.

Mark: So, in terms of getting back into the service, if you would just briefly describe your reintegration back into the service. I am sure you didn't have to go through basic training again but I am sure you had to go through some sort of processing?

Grimm: Here again it was like the start of World War II. It was, they had become the Air Forces. They had very few people bringing people back in like that. I packed my stuff from Gorman, my watch repair stuff, and I drove to Wisconsin and left it with my folks. Then I came back to Brooks Field and I was sworn in at Brooks Field. I had gotten my captaincy before I left Vegas in '46—November, I think, I got my captaincy. Then I came back down to Brooks Field and was sworn in again. Because at the time, why, I kept my captaincy. You see a lot of them lost it. They went back and were reverted back to a lower rank, but I didn't. There, again, they didn't know what to do with us. They shipped us from Brooks Field, where we were sworn in, to Randolph Field. But we met one formation a day and that was nothing, but here, and you were excused till 8 the next morning. Well, I'm not much for lying around and not doing anything. That is why I volunteered for the work at Vegas when I was still in student status. I didn't want to lie around I would rather be busy. So, we just lay around the pool and that was it. I went back to Gorman on several weekends with a little girl I had worked with. Her dad and I hunted together an awful lot. So, I would go back up to Gorman on weekends and then go back and do the same thing again.

Well, then all the sudden they decided they were going to send us to Mather Field in Sacramento for a refresher course. Well, I got to Mather Field and the fellows, the one in particular who was my instructor, I had known him at Vegas. He was the mess officer over the white mess when I went down to the colored squadrons to eat. By the way, the colored squadron's meals were much better than the white's. We were there, oh, I guess eight to ten weeks and then we were shipped back to Randolph Field to go into B-29s. I got back down there and I had already run into a lot of ex-friends, you know, from Childress in Las Vegas days at Randolph, were called back in. I got back down there and they still didn't know what to do with us. They called us into a meeting one day and said "Anybody with just a few points, overseas points, or none at all stand up. We need volunteers for the B-26". Now this is going to be confusing; in World War II there was a Murata B-26 made by Martin, then there was the Douglas A-26 that came out late in the war. As soon as the war was over they did away with the B-26s and made the A-26 the new B-26. That gets confusing.

Mark: That is confusing.

Grimm: So, this is for a B-26 outfit and I didn't have any points for overseas so I stood up and volunteered, knowing you should never volunteer in the service. But I did. So I was shipped out to a camp, I can't think of the name, somewhere down on the Coast, to go overseas. I went back to Wisconsin and saw my folks and went out to Sacramento. Sold my car and bought rings and sent them to my wife. Yesterday was our 44<sup>th</sup> anniversary by the way. I sent her an engagement ring because we were going to be married as soon as I got back from overseas. I thought I would be over there for two years minimum. Six months, four days and two hours or so later I had finished my missions and was back. She had to drop out of school so we could get married. But anyway, I got over there and the bunch of us was shipped to Emma Chummy, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group. I can't explain to this day their attitude towards us. It was a West Coast reserve outfit and their attitude was we don't need you, we will win the war by ourselves so they did nothing with us. We were there about three weeks and I got one flight in a B-26 with a Captain Ford and we flew up over Hiroshima. I saw what Japan looked like. We had ridden a train through there but were quite some distance from the so-called aiming point. They called us in one day and said, "You are going to the 452<sup>nd</sup> Bomb Group, home base is in Neo, Japan. But you will be at Canine at Pusan in Korea." We were glad to leave. It was just that bad. I had one friend that I had known, both he and his wife, even though they weren't married at the time, at Las Vegas and even he was cool. Really, not friendly at all. I don't, I didn't, and never will understand their attitude. But we went to Canine and got started to fly missions immediately. Where I had, had the refresher course I at least knew what the bombsight looked like again; you know. A lot of the fellows didn't get any active during the time they were out between World War II and Korea. They didn't have any time on the sight at all. Now, I flew 55 missions; I never turned a bombsight on. The missions we were required to fly at night you couldn't use the bombsight. We were too close to the ground. If it was flown right, and believe me, the crew I was on, we flew it right. The daylight missions, I think had seven daylight missions and the thing you drop bombs by SHORAN [SHORt Range Navigation], which was an

electronic forerunner of what you've got today. We had to teach ourselves how to run that. They had a C-47 with a machine in it that picked up the high station only, I believe it was. You flew an arch, the pilot had you find the arch and get him on it, and on your scope, tell him if it was right, left, high, or low. I had the pilot with me that was one of the best. I used to ride him all the way down that beam telling him, griping at him, you're a foot inside or a foot outside. It was the forerunner of what they are using now, the electronic sights and whatnot. But once you got onto it and knew what you were doing you could spot where you were, even at a low altitude, and keep the navigator right on the business. And we had a navigator that was just unbelievable. So, that was it. We got our 55 missions in, say, six months. And more time was spent waiting for transportation back to the States.

Mark: Now, these missions you flew on, if you would describe what it was you were going after on these missions? Or was it a lot of different things to describe?

Grimm: They could call and divert us from most anything. We would take off single ships at night. Now, we might take off, you might say 5:00 in the afternoon, and it would be daylight when we took off but by the time we got to the bomb line into North Korea it would be dark. We would fly our mission up there and if it were to be dropped by SHORAN, we would fly above the mountaintops and drop our bombs. This was information that was computed on the ground as to where and whatever the target might be and we set typed, the information. Now, I was in the aft end of the B-26. There was no passageway like the B-29. You went through a tunnel from the nose to the aft or from the forward section to the fuselage. You just didn't get back and forth. I could leave by a door that was sitting there with a seat with no back on the seat because we wore backpacks. There wasn't room for a back to the seat. It had a little swivel stool. The door you got in and, supposedly out of, was right at your leg. Then right in front of you was the bomb bay and it had canvas with a zipper on it. In the nighttime hours with the canvas open I could see better on the ground than the pilots could in the front. The wind was coming in but there was no distortion or anything. I could have gotten out that way. The SHORAN sat at my left but I had to sort of pull my elbows in to turn around and see what I was doing. I would set the information in the sight and we would get the take off. We would get to the bomb line and at the bomb line they had searchlights at the back of the bomb line shooting beams up into the air. They liked it with a little cloud cover at night so that the reflection from the light would give light on the ground so they could see, the people on the ground could see much better. We turned the bomb lights out and the guns on and all this and that and the other when we hit what was called the call letter, the snowflake. They turned us loose. We went into a section of North Korea alone. No other plane was supposed to be in the area at that time. We would drop our...if it was a SHORAN drop, we would drop our bombs by SHORAN. The SHORAN bombs would drop from the bomb bay, we always had one or two on each wing that we could drop either by me toggling or by the pilot toggling, or if I was flying in the nose as a bombardier, I could toggle. We did not use the bombsight. I know there are stories out, from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group especially, where they used the sight at night. We did not and I don't know of anybody that did. But we would tool around and if you saw lights of a

convoy, you could go down and below the mountaintops and strafe. What you tried to do was to strafe and get the lead truck and set it on fire and then tried to get the tail-end of it. That way you had them bottled up and then you could work them over with guns, bombs, and whatnot. The one fellow, the Captain Ford that I got the one flight at Emma Chummy, he came up to the 452<sup>nd</sup> with us and I was in the 728<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron. He flew the missions like my pilot Captain Palmer did and there was one other, a major, but I don't remember his name. But most of them didn't get down like they were supposed to. I am ashamed and sorry to say but that is the way that they did it. But we would go down and try to drop these bombs on the up mountain side because most of this was in the mountainous territory.

Mark: Right.

Grimm: We were on the west side of Korea. In spite of some of the books written by the 452<sup>nd</sup>, when I was there, we had the west side of Korea, not the east side. This Captain Ford and his bombardier, they dropped a 500-pound bomb on the up mountain side of a train and they blew the engine clear off the tracks and down the mountainside. Well, that train was on the railroad tracks and usually you caught trucks, they worked that over. Yet the next afternoon they were still making runs on that train. There were explosions of all kinds, and fires. But usually they were trucks and from where I was in the back-end, you could look down the mountains. They would have guards with rifles and their method of warning the trucks that there was an airplane in the area was by firing a rifle in the air. They had to have tracers because you could see the one little tracer bullet going into the air. As you went down the road, so to speak, towards this convoy the mountains were just one signal after another. Those lights would go and you would be surprised by what you could see from the air at night, even without lights from the ground. So, that was what we were trying to do. We were to stop the movement. Then you would catch troop concentrations and you would catch supply dumps and all that every now and then. But, I know, we didn't win the war by ourselves by any means. But we stopped an awful lot of traffic and supplies from getting through.

Mark: So, how often would you fly on these missions? You were there a short time and did 55 missions. I get the impression that you were up in the air quite often.

Grimm: I would say, in general now, sometimes the weather was so bad we really got going, good with the SHORAN. When I first got there we weren't trained in it or anything. Bad weather could ground us so that we didn't fly at night. Once we picked up on the SHORAN and whatnot we could fly above the clouds and drop SHORAN. Then you didn't dare go down because they had cables strung across some of the narrow valleys from mountaintop to mountaintop that would get planes. But I think if the total was ever tallied up anywhere, they got more fighters that way than they did the B-26s. We flew one night and I had never seen so much flack in my life. I don't know what the number of tracer bullets to regular, well, ammunition would be but some of them said, oh, 7 to 1; some said, 8 to 1. I had no idea but there was C-47 now. That was

the old workhorse, slow, slow, slow. The Navy was over, dropping flares over a bridge

**[End of Side B, Tape 1]**

and I have never seen so much flack in my life as was shot up at those fellows. Then they had fighter pilots, Navy fighter pilots diving underneath those C-47s to strafe the troops that were on the ground or the trucks or whatever they were after. We stayed away out of the area but we could see it. We didn't lose a plane that night so whatever it was they accomplished quite a bit. There were quite a few fires on the ground. But Palmer one night, my pilot, he caught the lead truck and started it on fire and then we went up and down that mountain road dropping bombs on it. We started quite a few fires and then he finally got the last truck in the bunch and they couldn't turn around. The roads were so narrow and just little gravel roads, I could say, but they weren't even near the gravel roads Cassville used to have around there, little country roads. The ones that we were on the few times that I got out on the roads around there, they were gravel, thin layer. They just couldn't turn around and get out of there so they had to sit there or leave the truck. Sit there they might have been out running. I sure couldn't have blamed them.

Mark: So, now the times that you weren't flying missions, what did you do with your free time?

Grimm: Not much.

Mark: Not much, pretty boring, huh?

Grimm: Every time that Palmer, my pilot, any and every time he had to go on gunnery missions. Now they had to practice, oh, once every two weeks and Palmer many times made a flight a week. I would go with him. I trusted him completely and I loved to fly so I would go with him. That was a relief. Now near there, there was a hospital. We were outside of Pusan by, oh, 10, 12 miles I guess. It was called Quinine. The Navy, the bay right at the end of the runway, the Navy anchored their ships there. They unloaded, well, facing the bay. From the air base they unloaded to the left on that side of the bay. Then there was a big valley. I did get a ride through there one day when we went to a squadron's party up on the beach. I never saw so much equipment stacked and stored in my life as there was at that valley. If they had ever come down there with one plane and dropped bombs and whatnot, they would have had a field day. But we, the Swedish had a hospital and the Swedish nurses started to go down to the beach near the hospital and go swimming. When we found out...

(THE TAPE BROKE. WE LOST ABOUT 8" OF THE TAPE).

Grimm: ...so, we spent quite a bit of time down there. Oh, we would go to Pusan toward the end of the month if the weather was good. Our food wasn't too great. I didn't like

- tuna at that time and after, oh, you could go to Pusan and go out to the naval pier and they had a PX out there. About the only thing you could find out there which was more than we had, well, it was tuna so we would buy tuna to eat. I can't stand the smell of it to this day.
- Mark: Did you get to try any Korean food?
- Grimm: No, they had something there that they would mix up and bury in crocks.
- Mark: Um huh, kimchi.
- Grimm: Oh, okay, you know the...
- Mark: I've got a friend that is Korean. I am well familiar with it.
- Grimm: Well, I couldn't stand the smell of it. I guess I've got a weak stomach. I couldn't stand the smell of it. Now, we had an old boy that one night the nose got hit, he took his earphones and throat mike off and hung them over the bombsight and bailed out. The shell had gone through the nose and missed the pilot and the dashboard but went through the nose and up and out the canopy where the pilot was sitting. He did not give an order to bail out but there was an awful roar and what it was when that shell hit this bombardier took the time to take off his earphones and throat mike and hang them over the bombsight but he dove out the door. He walked out and the only thing that kept him alive was that kimchi. He would find them and he find a crock and break into it and that is what he ate. I always, I never envied him in any way but I always wondered how he lived through it to eat that stuff.
- Mark: So, you spent about a year in Korea?
- Grimm: No, about six months.
- Mark: Six months. That was it?
- Grimm: Yeah, I was done.
- Mark: There was a rotation thing in Vietnam. Was it the same in Korea where you had a certain set amount of time you were supposed to be there? Or was it a point system like at the end of World War II?
- Grimm: No, it was nothing but finish your missions.
- Mark: Oh, I see.
- Grimm: No, you finished your missions and you were back. By then they had it going so that they were bringing in fellows but I don't know of any shortages. Most of the fellows were bombardier and navigators by that time. Our navigator in our crew was a



bombardier. I had the navigation DR training and I flew one mission as a navigator. When we left Korea they told us we would be going into B-57s and that was at the English Canberra. My back was killing me from this seat without a back and whatnot, but rather than go into the hospital and have nothing done for you, why I elected to keep my big mouth shut. I came back to the States. I came back to Texas and my wife and I married and took a trip to Wisconsin and then came back around here. I was supposed to go to Fairchild, Washington in, for B-36s. That was a kick in the teeth because I knew what long missions would do to my back. When I got back to Texas from being in Wisconsin, I had orders that reassigned me to B-50s at Tucson. Well, I knew that wasn't nearly as bad but, the missions wouldn't be as long. So, then I went into Sakae (sp??) at Tucson and we were just forming a crew. That is about as far as I got. I flew one morning, one Sunday morning and dropped bombs from 35,000 feet, which was the highest elevation I had ever dropped from. Turned the sight on and I said—there was an instructor with me—I said, “This sight is not acting up” and he said, “Well, let's drop anyway.” I dropped the first one. It was fifty feet at, I think at, 4:00, which was a good bomb. The next one was 300 feet at 5:00 and then let's go home, that was it. That was the one and only time, after I got back, that I dropped bombs. We started forming a crew but something always went wrong. Those were 14 to 16 hour missions and they were just flatly killing me. After I don't know how many training missions we flew but we were far from being ready, combat ready, the flight surgeon grounded me. Then he transferred out and the following one wanted to put me back on flying status. Well, I will concede the x-rays didn't show anything, but I am still having trouble right now with my back again. I just refused to let them put me on flying status until something was done. So, they shipped me to Shepherd Field, Wichita Falls, Texas. I sat up there and I know, that they couldn't find anything but there was something bending over I just couldn't take. So, they asked me where I wanted to go to get out of SAC. I said, “Put me back into the training command.” The bombardier refresher course that had been offered at Mather Field had been transferred to Waco, Texas. By the time they got the papers cut and everything, the bombardier at Waco had moved to Wichita Falls about the same day I got orders to go to Waco. Well, I got down to Waco and, well, they didn't know what to do with me. I asked the photography school—I had a MOS, a 1035, which was bombardier there—too short, we can't let you have that. So I sat down there at Waco and they did not know what to do with me. I asked for another schooling in photography, another type of photography, and they turned me down on that. I didn't even get up on that to the CO of the field; they turned me down at the squadron. Finally, the sergeant had my paperwork out and he said, “Well, what are you doing in the service?” Well, I went back intending to stay in the service. Nothing was ever said about a time limit of recalls—being called in or shipped out. The war was still going on in Korea. He said, “You were supposed to be out in July.” This was in November. He said, “You are not even supposed to be in the service.” Then he said, “What do you want to do?” I said, “Well, they don't know what to do with me. You can just let me out.” He said, “Okay. I will get the orders cut.” I called my wife and said, “We are out.” She didn't know what I was talking about, so, I said, “We're out of the service altogether.” Now, she is a lot younger than I am and I knew what these moves and whatnot could be. I might leave for the base for the

morning and not be home for six months and all this and that and the other. I didn't want that unloaded on her to attend to. I liked the service a lot and I loved to fly, but my back was giving me the trouble so, I just couldn't see any future in it any more so, I got out. I had always been told that I could get work on the aircraft—Bell Helicopter is the one they were mentioning just north of where I live now—on the strength of my watch repair service and whatnot. So, I came and drove up from Waco to well, Hurst, Bedford, and Ulher. They are three little towns that where the 18-B I believe they call it, to Bell Helicopter. They didn't have any need for instrument repairs and that is what I was applying for. They told me that if I was to go down to Graham Prairie, which is just east of Arlington and before you get into Dallas, they maybe had an opening for me. I got down there at going home time and they were closed. So, I left and went around the corner going back to the road to Waco and there was Temco that I had never heard of. I pulled in and they said they needed some people. If I could be up there at 8:00 in the morning, why, we will send you to downtown Dallas and you can take the exam and we will see. So, went to Waco and I came back the next morning and they sent me down to Dallas. Well, you had to have test of some kind to get into aircraft at that time. I went down there and they told me I was over age for what they wanted. But they sent me down and I made the highest score around squares, and pegs, holes, and this and that, and whatnot. The highest score that had ever been made. So, I came back to Temco and told them what they said, well, you are over the age but we will let you know in a few days. I got ready to leave and the phone rang and it was the people downtown telling them that I had made this high score. On the strength of that, they hired me. So, I had a week before I was out of the service and I went back to Waco, but then I had a job to come to. They trained me and I stayed with Temco more or less. Temco joined with Ling, then Temco-Ling went with Chance bought it then it became LTV, and now it's changed hands again. I don't know who in the hell owns what. There are a dozen companies all tied up into it now. So, that takes care of my servicing. I stayed with what I was doing which was a technical illustrator though they called me a project engineer so they could give me a little more money at the time. I retired in '84, and then I came back to work on and off for eight years after that, and now I am fully retired.

Mark: In terms of your post-military life, I have a couple of questions. First of all, did you join any sort of veterans' organizations?

Grimm: No, I joined the VFW at Cassville after World War II, because they were trying to get organized but I knew I wasn't going to stay. But I joined. I have never and still never have been a joiner of anything, I don't know why. I don't enjoy it. I never go so I just don't join. At the end of the year, why, I told them I was going to Texas to live and that I wouldn't be back. They didn't bother me with it then. I never joined anything down here, including the union, but then I went into white-collar job drawing and pictures and whatnot. I had an ability that you could tell me what you want—and there was no engineering or no tool design drawing—you could tell me what you wanted prior to being to the engineering or tool designing stage and I could put down what you wanted. That was just a God-given gift. That is all there was to

it. I had no training in that line. So, as a result, I was working on bids for most of the time. I was an illustrator, for let's say, 30 years. I always had a job and always had work to do where others were being laid off and whatnot. That was what I did in the aircraft. My wife needed something to do and I wasn't making that much money so she went back to school. She just started in college when we married and she, well, we had two, then finally, three girls before she got her, no, we might have had our fourth, the boy. She got her degree in teaching and she has taught 27 years now, I believe, about two blocks from the house here where we live. She enjoys it. I don't like it but she thinks she better teach until she is 65 so she has some kind of income coming from that. It's a teacher's deal with Medicaid and Medicare. We raised four kids and they all have degrees, except one, the smartest one of the bunch, and she didn't even go to school. She works for the post office. She is very happy but she just didn't know what she wanted to do so she didn't want to waste time in school. That's about it.

Mark: Okay, that was very interesting and that is all the questions I had pretty much. Is there anything you would like to add or think we have skipped over?

Grimm: Well, no nothing really. Nothing important. Just things that happened. The city of Childress just had a fifty-year reunion about a month ago. My wife and I drove up and it was funny, that was the big thing in the history of Childress, that air base there, the air base itself other than the runways, is now a prison of some kind. They have kept the runways up and they went all out. People were just wonderful to us but there was nothing to do. It was a dry town so I didn't start drinking till I was 28 and about the same time I transferred to Vegas. I went from lights out at nine o'clock to the lights never turned out in Vegas. So it was an education and I don't regret any portion of the time I was in the service. I don't know what caused my back trouble but I just don't know nothing shows up. But I just, well, I can't lift things and can't bend over like I think I ought to in spite of not being a young man anymore.

Mark: Okay. I thank you for taking the time out. It was a good day to talk to me.

Grimm: Well, I sure appreciate it.

Mark: I appreciate it, too. Like I say, you are about 1:13 or 1:14, something like that. We are getting a pretty good day on here.

Grimm: The fellows I went into the service with, that went to this course, Earl Oakie was one name. He now lives in Denver. I think he is retired from the Mint out there. Robert Dedrick, he spends the winters down in the Valley. I can't tell you about any of the rest of them who took this course, other than Les Harley and he went back to Dubuque, Iowa. He was a pilot, he was the one who made it as a pilot. You might get in touch with Earl Oakie or Bob Dedrick. I'll tell you what, I will give you his address. I still got it.

**[End of Interview]**