

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center**

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
DON NASS
Air Force, World War II

2015

OH
1956

OH
1956

Nass, Don. Oral History Interview, 2015.

Approximate length: 1 hour and 19 minutes.

Contact WVM Research Center for access to original recording.

Abstract:

In this oral history interview, Don Nass, a resident of Jefferson, Wisconsin, recounts his experience serving in the U. S. Army Air Corp, 20th Air Force, 29th Bomb Group, 314th Bomb Wing, 52nd Bob Squadron during World War II from 1944 to 1946. Nass enlisted in the Air Force once he turned eighteen, and attended basic training at Sheppard Field (Texas). Nass explains why he chose to enlist in the Air force, rather than be drafted into the Army. Nass then trained in Central Fire Control for B-29s at flight school in Pratt, Kansas. After training, Nass was stationed at Guam for a year. Along with his crew, he went on sixteen bomb raids in Japan. Nass describes how his perception of the fire raids has changed over time. He also describes some memorable missions, where his plane was damaged by flak.

Nass describes the base he lived on in Guam. He discusses what soldiers did for entertainment, and seeing Bob Hope. After the war, Nass discusses dropping supplies off at a prisoner of war camp. Nass then describes coming home, and how he felt being thanked for his service by civilians. He then worked on his father's lumber yard before selling it. Afterwards, he worked as a stockbroker for twenty-six years. At the end of the interview, Nass discusses what his military career meant to him,

Biographical Sketch:

Don Nass grew up in Jefferson, Wisconsin and enlisted in the Air Force after turning eighteen. He served in the 29th Bomb Group, 314th Bomb Wing, 52nd Bob Squadron from 1944 to 1946. He went to basic training at Sheppard Field (Texas) and attended flight school in Pratt, Kansas. Nass trained as a Central Fire Control crewmember and worked in a B-29. He was assigned to Guam where he went on sixteen fire-bombing raid missions to Japan. After the war, Nass worked in his father's lumber yard and then worked as a stock broker.

Archivist's Note:

Transcriptions are a reflection of the original oral history recording. Due to human and machine fallibility transcripts often contain small errors. Transcripts may not have been transcribed from the original recording medium. It is strongly suggested that researchers engage with the oral history recording as well as the transcript, if possible.

Interviewed by Dan Juday and Connie Kottwitz, 2015.

Transcribed by Connie Kottwitz, 2015.

Reviewed and abstract written by Victoria Paige, 2018.

Interview Transcript:

Juday: Okay, today is January 31st, 2015. This is an interview with Don Nass who served with the U. S. Army Air Corp, 20th Air Force, 29th Bomb Group, 314th Bomb Wing, 52nd Bob Squadron during World War II from the twenty-fifth of February, 1944 to the sixteenth of April 1946. This interview is being conducted in Jefferson, Wisconsin. The interviewer is Daniel Juday. We also have Connie Kottwitz with us and uh, Taffy [Don Nass's dog] will be in the background.

This interview is being recorded for the Wisconsin Veterans Museum Oral History Program. First off, I would like to thank you for doing the interview, and if we could start with--if you could tell us where you were born?

Nass: I was born in Jefferson, here in a house, on newspapers, about four blocks from here.

Juday: Really!

Nass: Yeah.

Juday: Okay. Now tell me a little about your background and life circumstances before entering the military service.

Nass: [Clock chiming in background] Well, I went to grade school, high school and uh, then I waited my turn. Most of my friends were already gone, because I was younger for my grade. And, uh, I the war started, but I was fifteen when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. And, uh, I didn't, I didn't, I watched a movie one time when I was young and I saw--a movie of the First World War and I saw these troops lying in a trench, and the snow was coming down, and I thought, "If I have to go in the service now, I don't want to be in the Army, I don't want to be in the Marines, I don't want to live like that." And I couldn't swim, so I didn't uh sign up for the Navy or the Coast Guard and that left the Air Force, so one year--one month before I turned eighteen, I enlisted in the Army Air Force. I ended up flying back and forth over the water [laughs] on bombing missions, and that defeated the whole purpose of what I tried to avoid [laughs].

Juday: That's true. Um, now when you entered your--your military service, you said you were--you just turned eighteen. Um, what--how did you start out in the military, I mean you described um, what led you to join the Army Air Corps. But when you joined the military, um, what was your initial reaction, and what types of things did you do?

Nass: Well, of course, basic training, that lasted for two months at Sheppard Field. Then we went--they interviewed me and decided what I could and couldn't do and I had the ability to do, and uh, they mentioned that there was a new airplane coming out, the B-29, and did you want to try out for that? They needed crew members. So, I wrote the test, and they said, "You were qualified for that, or to be a radio operator." And I said, "By God, I wanted to be a Central Fire Control man." So, they sent me to Denver, for three months. I went to school there. Learned all about the system; how it worked, while the other four gunners that were

supposedly on this crew that we assembled went to gunnery school, and then we all got together in Pratt, Kansas, and began our flight training. I had never flown in an airplane in my life, and my first flight was in a B-29! And I was really impressive! And, uh, we trained for five months at Pratt, and then we sent--we were sent overseas.

Juday: Um, in your, in your training, when you started, is there anything that stood out with, or stood out, with your training, with how they conducted training? Um, or any stories about your, at least your flight school, or the--or basic training itself? What was that like?

Nass: Basic training in the Air Force wasn't really a big deal compared to--I, I never shot a gun in my life [laughs], which the instructor told me was to my--was advantageous for me. They didn't have to correct bad styles of shooting. So I became a sharpshooter with a pistol. I never could hit anything with a carbine, but uh, after I uh, got the training and they showed me how to do it, I was--went from marksman to sharpshooter to expert with a pistol just because I did it the right way. So, uh, other than that, Central Fire Control, they always held over us if we flunked out, we'd end up in the Infantry because the Air Force was a part of the Army at that time, and that was the greatest motivator I had, anyway. And it was not that simple to learn about that gunner system. It was complicated because it was the only system in any airplane where they fired all the guns remotely. And they--we were assisted in aiming those guns by a computer. And was--I had just found some books that I didn't know I had trained--had learned to train with. I had written down notes there that I have no idea what they mean now, but apparently, I had to learn all this. And, uh, that's how it started and--

Juday: What was your uh, first duty assignment? Was that in Kansas?

Nass: That's when the crew was assembled. And then I met the other crew. There were eleven on a crew and I don't know what you'd call a duty assignment--I knew where I was supposed to be in the airplane, and uh, we just learned to trust each other and get along and uh, that's how we trained. And I had my first view of a disaster. We were flying in formation with three other--two other airplanes one day and one of the airplanes had troubles. And I was sitting all in the dome, over Dallas. And the one plane peeled off because he had trouble and the other plane came behind us and took that plane's spot, what he was supposed to do. But he got into our prop wash and it flipped him over on his back and he spun in all the way down to the ground and I could watch that. And he hit three oil sheds and he hit the center one upside down and he and all of his guys were killed. That was my first of many that I saw. That was in training and uh, after we landed the next day, everybody had to go fly. Otherwise, psychologically, that works on you and uh, they made us do that.

Juday: When you got to your first station, which was Pratt?

Nass: Yes.

Juday: In Kansas. What did you think about the base and the surroundings?

Nass: I liked Pratt, because like I--it was a community just like Jefferson. The same size and I felt at home there. And the people were nice, they uh, just kind to us. Not like I, I never got that feeling in Denver when I was going to school there. But, during that training session, why--everybody was so friendly to us. They invited us to football games; we were invited out to

eat. That was nice. I hated to leave it for more than one reason [laughs]. I knew where we were going then.

Juday: Right. Did you have any additional duties when you were at Pratt other than just your training?

Nass: No, nothing.

Juday: It was just all about--

Nass: Yup.

Juday: Okay.

Nass: One day we flew, one day we went to school. The third day we took physical training of some sort, running and that sort of thing.

Juday: Do you have any other stories about Pratt, or any um, uh, any stories--I know air crews like to do jokes um--play jokes on each other and do things like that. Do you have any other stories or anything you want to share about your time at Pratt?

Nass: Nothing that I can think of off-hand about the training at Pratt [clears throat]. We had a couple funny things happen when we were flying our bombing missions, but nothing that I can think of that occurred at Pratt.

Juday: Now, when you were there, um, did you--when started writing your letters, and you wrote how many letters home?

Nass: 442.

Juday: Uh, did you start when you got at Pratt or when you were in training?

Nass: I started right away when I--when we first ended up--when we first went, we had to go to Chicago for a week and from there we were taken to uh, where was it? Texas, somewhere, I can't think of the city anymore [dog barking in background] and uh, from there to Denver for central fire control training and then five months in Pratt and then the ground crew all left on boats and we each took a turn flying an airplane. We were transferred from Pratt to Harrington by train and there along the runway were all brand new B-29s lined up that had been flown over from Wichita, eighty miles away. And we each were assigned an airplane and flew it for three days so we could get familiar with it, and left for overseas from there.

Kottwitz: The letter writing--

Nass: All that time, I wrote letters. I tried to write a letter every day, but it didn't always work out.

Kottwitz: Did the military encourage you to write letters, or you were--

Nass: No.

Kottwitz: --left to your own--

Nass: No. I was just a--

Kottwitz: You just liked writing?

Nass: I was just a kid eighteen, nineteen years old and I knew my mother and dad only had one--I had a sister, who was younger than me. And I don't know so long ago why I did all that. I guess to alleviate their worries somewhat and I don't know if I accomplished that or not. But, uh, I wrote them, and my mother was good enough to keep them all, which I never knew until I got home. Here they all were in a big box all in a row, and they are still in the back.

Juday: Now, um, we had talked about this, um, you had a code when you wrote your letters?

Nass: Mhmm.

Juday: And you had to establish that before you left.

Nass: Yep.

Juday: How did you do that and what were you--how did you establish that, establish that code.

Nass: Everybody had something.

Juday: Hmm.

Nass: But some people would poke pins in, and that was a dead giveaway. I just, if I remember what I did there, I think it was the second--the first letter of every word in the second paragraph would spell the message. And if I started the letter, "Dear Family", that was an indication that they should pay particular attention to the second paragraph. And that's, for instance, like how I told them I was on Guam. Because in the second paragraph, I said, "Got up and made my bed this morning, as usual, and found a little ah, crocodile, not crocodile [laughs] a lizard in my shoe. And nobody caught that [laughs]. But that's how I sent messages.

Juday: So you really had to think when you were writing--

Nass: Oh, yeah--

Juday: How am I going to--

Nass: What would make sense. We'd get the message across and still would make sense so that the censor didn't uh, become suspicious.

Juday: Did you ever, at any time, have any problems with the censors?

Nass: No.

Juday: No.

Nass: Nope.

Juday: Now, throughout the war, you were still writing your letters.

Nass: Mhmm.

Juday: Did--do you know if they all got through, if all your letters got through, or if there was any--you know, at any point, or at any point did they say, "Okay, no more letters going out", because there might be an operation coming up?

Nass: I read almost all the letters when I got home, and so did the librarian that did this, that put this book together for me, in payment for my talks. And I can't remember, nor did she ever discover any place where anything had been deleted. So most everything I wrote must have gone through.

Juday: Now, getting into your--you've already been to Pratt, um, what was your, what was your next assignment after leaving Pratt?

Nass: Flew to Guam. We flew from Pratt, from Harrington, which was where we picked up the new airplanes. We flew to San Francisco, flew over the Golden Gate Bridge at one in the morning, landed in Honolulu--spent two days there, and flew to Kwajalein which was the little island from there. From there and from there, to Tinian, where we landed. From there they took the new airplane away from us, and there is where I watched the first mission take off, from Tinian to the fire bombing raid of March 10th and 11th, which was the first major fire bombing raid that the B-29s went on, that I'm thankful I didn't get on. And then from there, we were flown to Guam which was where we were based. And then we started flying our missions from there.

Juday: Now the fire bombing raids, what were the--what was the purpose of those?

Nass: To get the Japanese to quit. It was a horrible thing, but that's not, it wasn't that much fun to watch. Had I known now--then, what I know now, I would have really been upset, what happened to those people on those fire bombing raids. We flew two types of missions, daylight and night missions. If it was a daylight mission, we carried high explosive bombs and we flew all the way up to Japan [clears throat] to within an hour of Japan and there we formed up into various squadron groups and wings and flew the--over the target with explosive bombs and dropped them en mass to eliminate the factories or [inaudible] yards or that sort of thing. If it was a fire bombing raid, we flew the entire raid by--each airplane by itself. And we carried the incendiary bombs then. That was the difference.

Kottwitz: Why would the--in the fire bombing raids, would the airplanes be flying more solo than in a group? [Clock chiming in background]

Nass: It's hard to fly missions at night in a group in formation. It's very difficult.

Kottwitz: Because you can't--

Nass: Right. And you get disoriented. Where in the daylight, of course. I preferred night missions. It was just one more added upsetting thing for me to have all these airplanes in a compact unit and one gets hit and sometimes they blow up and that usually take another airplane or two with them. I just was more comfortable at night. I just figured nobody could see us, but that wasn't the case [laughs].

Juday: Okay. Now, you were in Guam. Is that where you were mainly based out of?

Nass: Yup.

Juday: For you entire--

Nass: Right. Spent a whole year there.

Juday: Okay. A whole year? And how missions did you fly out of Guam?

Nass: I flew, I actually flew sixteen missions. What happened was we flew four missions, and then our pilot had a nervous breakdown. And so for seven weeks, we just sat there while they trained the co-pilot to be a pilot. And the only time we flew was when somebody got sick. One day they came in and needed a co-pilot. And uh, he never came back. And then one day they needed a left gunner, Joe had to go. And he never came back. And then guess what? One day they came in, and they said, "We need a central fire control man. Somebody's sick." And this is the game you play, they're asking you if you'll go, but, in effect what they are doing is telling you, "You better go or you are going to be on K.P. for the rest of your life and you'll never get beyond yard bird." So, I--they expect you to have this Hollywood answer, "Oh, I can't wait to go shoot at those Japs!" But don't say that, just, "Yeah, okay." And that's away you go. And I obviously came back.

Juday: Yeah. Now when, particularly with that, when they asked you to uh, they "voluntold" you to go, um, [Nass laughs] did you stay with that crew, or did you come back and uh, were you part of your original crew?

Nass: Then we, yeah, we just once the co-pilot had been trained, then we had, we all got together again, and we began flying bombing missions again. It was kind of interesting: the very first mission the pilot came up to me before we took off and he said, "Now Nass", he said, "Will you testify those guns, I want you to tell us over the intercom, I don't want those guns going off at midnight, when we are an hour off Japan and we not know it." I said, "Yeah, I'll take care of that, Sir." So we got to within an hour of Japan, [clears throat] and the navigator told us that it was time to get ready. So we all went to the john one more time, strapped ourselves in and I announced that we were going to--I was going to test fire the guns. I fired them all from this remote station. And the navigator, who was the--far more nervous than any of the rest of us, didn't get the message. He had climbed up out of his chair, and he was sitting in the end of the tunnel, with a sexton taking a star shot, and it was about midnight, and it was dark as pitch otherwise. And I, from fifty feet away, pressed this button and these 450 caliber machine guns went off four feet in front of him [laughs] and within five seconds, he was out of that tunnel and

he was back in that chair. And he called me some names that I never knew I was [laughs]. Ten hours later when we landed, he was still railing at me and finally the pilot came up and says, "Hey, Bob, leave him alone." He says, "He announced it, you just didn't get the message." So, we were riding back in the truck and he stuck his hand out and he apologized. He says, "I'm sorry, Nass. I just lost it." [Laughs].

Juday: 450 calibers, I can imagine!

Nass: [Laughs].

Juday: Are there any other missions that--I'm sure each mission had its own um, dangers and uh, um, they were unique to a degree. Any of your missions really stand out to you? Like some that, you know, I'm sure some were probably a little hairy, or a little more dangerous than the others ones. But any missions really stand out to you?

Nass: The third mission I was on was fire-bombing raid to Tokyo. The first was Kobe, the second Nagoya, and then they said you're ready for Tokyo. And that was a fire-bombing raid. And that I can still envision like it was yesterday. Some after that, I don't remember at all. And the last mission of the war was another one. We knew the war was almost over, and uh, that was an uneasy feeling, too. To know that if you were going to go down with the war almost over, we would have been very upset. But the fire-bombing raid that night was--you fly up to what they called the I.P., the initial point, that's about fifty miles from the target. And long before you even get to the I.P., you can see the target, the city is burning. And after you make that turn, and you start heading towards that target, and that fire gets bigger and bigger, and then you see that barrage of flak, and those hundreds of search lights, it, you just--you're praying, your mouth is dry, your heart's beating at twice its normal rate, and you're thinking, "How are we ever going to get through that?" And then, when you're over that target, and that--the doors on the B-29 open up, not with an electric motor, but hydraulically. And they bang open like that, you know it's going to happen, but that makes you jump, too. You're just--and the, that mission, there was a guy in a B-29 on our left side that was burning. And I saw him arc down into that fire. [Clears throat] And then, at that time, I didn't even know, they told us, "Don't jump out until you can get beyond the target. Otherwise, your lungs will sear, and you won't--you'll be dead before you hit the ground and your parachute will catch on fire." So, uh, and it was no fun to jump out after that either, because you're jumping out into the dark, and you don't know if you are going to land on a lake, or electric wires, until you hit the ground. But, that was the mission that I still can see just as plainly as if it were yesterday, 'cause it was so intense. Those other two, Kobe and Nagoya weren't that bad. They were fires, they were bad, but 360 B-29s had gone over before we ever got there, and then there were 200 behind us yet. So when you are in the middle of that whole thing, it was, it was a sight that I'll never, ever, ever forget out of my mind.

Juday: Talking about that mission specifically, do you feel that that mission really contributed to helping end the war? I mean, that I understand that dropping the two bombs um, finished it, but do you think that that mission, itself, really had a big impact?

Nass: I think it did. I think the fire bombing raids had more of an effect than uh, bombing a factory. I think that, especially now that I know what happened on the ground afterwards, which we weren't even aware of. I always imagined those Japanese were standing there shaking their fists

at us on the street and watching their house burn. But it wasn't like that. They jumped in the river and boiled to death. If they jumped in the swimming pool, they found all those bodies in there the next day, 'cause all the water had evaporated and they were all lying in the bottom of these pools, charred. And you could not live if you were within that inferno. And especially, the one that occurred one, three weeks before, the March 10th and 11th. That was turned into what they called a firestorm. But all the, these individual fires melded into one huge flame and the flame went up almost three miles. It was, that was one that I imagined these other guys that was on that, that I watched take off from Tinian. It must have been an unbelievable sight. And that certainly must have contributed--I don't know why that it did last that long--

Juday: Hmm.

Nass: --with what they were doing to their people [dog barking in background]. It bothered me, too. And I didn't know it was that bad.

Juday: Now you were talking about, with that mission, they told you when you shouldn't jump out, when you should, um, had you ever had to bail out of an aircraft?

Nass: No, never had.

Juday: That's very fortunate.

Kottwitz: What altitude would they fly at when they were doing those?

Nass: Well, we were--normally, you would fly missions up until the time we got there, they were found out that missions that were flown up to 25 to 30,000 feet were worthless, because they couldn't hit the broadside of barn, even though this wonderful bomb sight was supposed to put it them the pickle barrel. So, [General Curtis] LeMay said, "You go down", the lowest that we ever went was 5,000 feet. We, I think, never got below eight or nine. But, the guys that were assigned that altitude could even smell burning flesh. And some of the crews that came back, they were sick. They were so--that's how bad it was.

Juday: Hmm.

Nass: I'd never experienced that. But--

Juday: Now, you referenced 'LeMay'.

Nass: He was our General.

Juday: Right.

Nass: Commanding General.

Juday: Right. Now you, are you speaking of Curtis LeMay?

Nass: Yeah.

Juday: Do you want to talk a little bit about him and maybe what--have you ever had a chance to meet him, or --?

Nass: No.

Juday: You just--

Nass: Tech Sergeants don't talk to Generals [laughs].

Juday: Yeah, he was, he was, I know that he was quite an architect during that time period. And when you mentioned him, he was part of our history, too, when I went through, so.

Nass: I read his biography, and I read one quote that he had on that fire bombing raid, when the calls started coming back from the mission, from each airplane reported back as it went over the target and left it, the results of what they were doing. And, uh, he, LeMay told everybody to go home in his headquarters, and just his aides stayed with him. And they just sat there and listened to these reports come in, and he told his aide, he said, "Uh, you know if we lose this war, we were going to be branded as war criminals. And if we win it, we're going to be heroes." And that was his impression of what was going on, and it was his idea to do it that way.

Juday: Um, previously, when we had talked, you talked about landing on--your appreciation for the the Marine Corps--landing on Iwo Jima. Do you want to talk a little about Iwo Jima?

Nass: Well, we wouldn't be having this [laughs] conversation if it wouldn't have been for those Marines taking Iwo Jima. We landed there three times. The last time we were hit pretty bad over Tokyo, a suburb of Tokyo, on our last mission. That's when one of the guys in front of us got rammed by a fighter and I watched him go down. Only two guys got out [coughs]. And we were shot up pretty badly, too. And, um, we got, I was the one, I was so engrossed in watching him go down, I didn't realize that that sound of gravel hitting the airplane that was us catching it. Because the airplane, the 29 was pressurized and heated, when it--all those holes appeared, the airplane fogged up inside. And we couldn't see anything. And I remember the pilot calling out, "Are we on fire?" And for maybe a minute or two, it was touch and go. And then finally the engineer called and he said, "I think that's condensation." And uh, I was willing to buy that! And, uh, it was. And it eventually blew out, and but we barely made Iwo Jima with the gas that was streaming out behind us. But we got there otherwise I wouldn't be talking to you [laughs].

Juday: Of your--of the missions that you flew, I know some of them were, were probably high altitude, um, how--did you, did you always come back with damage or did--?

Nass: No.

Juday: Was it, was it kind of like a percentage of missions that you flew where you were actually--where the airframe was hit?

Nass: That was the only time we were hit really bad. We were hit a couple of times before that, but nothing that was frightening. You could hear some clangs outside, but that was a pretty tough one. The other times we had one fuel cell that got hit and that's why we had to land, [clock

chimes in background] and I can't remember the third time, why we landed, but it was something to do with the engine. You didn't want to land there 'cause golly, Iwo wasn't settled very much and it was still, they were still scrapping there, and there was no place to house us. We had to sleep sitting under the wing until they fixed whatever was wrong. And you hoped you could get off again. But, I'm glad -- I much rather been in that airplane that in be one of those Marines [laughs].

Juday: Yeah, good point. When uh, when you were flying, you were talking about the flak, specifically that fire bomb mission. Now, with the heavy flack, um what was more of a concern to you, the flak that was sent up from the ground, or the air cover, the Japanese air cover?

Nass: The flak.

Juday: The flak.

Nass: There weren't that many fighters in the air. I think they were concerned that we were going to invade, and they were doing their best to save their fighters. We saw them, but uh, other than the one time when they attacked us, and rammed that airplane in front of us, uh we didn't see that many fighters. But the anti-aircraft fire always gave you the creeps [laughs]. And I was one of four people on the airplane that could see it. The other seven didn't have a window, or they flew backwards. The pilot, co-pilot, bombardier, obviously, could see it. They were in the nose, and I was in the upper dome. And we four were the only four that could see what was coming. I guess that was both good and bad [laughs].

Juday: Now you said you were Central Fire Control on the air frame, on the B29. How would you describe that position, and how that uh, that weapons system in that air frame, how it worked and the amount of protection that it gave the plane?

Nass: Well, if you've ever hunted, you know you have to lead, if you are going to try to shoot a duck. And that's what's complicated about trying to defend yourself in an airplane, because how far should you lead that fighter in order to hit him, because it's easy to hit a duck, but if you think of the speed of an airplane attacking you, plus the fact that you're moving through the air at about 200 miles an hour. It's a complicated, difficult thing to hit an attacking fighter. But, what the B29 had that no other airplane had was a computer. And all we had to do was aim it right at the fighter at all times, we didn't have to try and figure out how far to lead that airplane. And uh, it was, like I told people, unless your hand shook, which mine did, it was much easier to hit an attacking fighter. I never, ever saw a one of our airplanes, one of our fighters' protection. Nobody ever escorted us anywhere. They always mentioned after the war, that the fighters were based on Iwo Jima, but they never escorted us on daylight missions. But, uh, that made it much easier. And all the guns were fired remotely. I didn't sit in a cold turret with goggles on and a face mask, freezing my--we sat in a warm room and uh, with shirt sleeves. And uh, it was--you were comfortable and you had an advantage that no other airplane in any, any--of any nation had [clears throat]. This was a unique, unique aircraft in that respect. When we flew up, I had a library book along. I had nothing to do for four or five hours. Sometimes, we'd play cards in the back room, with the radar operator and a couple of guys. It wasn't too tough until we got close to Japan, then things changed [laughs].

Juday: Um, now here's one--um, do you remember the tail number of your aircraft?

Nass: No, I don't. The B-29 Bomb Group insignia was a big "O", but I don't remember our particular airplane number. Nor did we have a name. Most airplanes were named, but uh, ours wasn't. We didn't have a name. For awhile, they insisted we name airplanes after cities in the United States to encourage bomb--bond, bond sales. And that worked for a little while, but guys got sick of that and then they started naming airplanes something again. But--

Juday: So you guys didn't have any nose art or anything on your plane?

Nass: No. We didn't on our airplane. No.

Juday: I know that was a big--some of the fighters, some of the bigger bombers--

Nass: And we didn't always have the same airplane, most of the time we did, but if there was something wrong with it, why we'd get assigned another airplane once in a while.

Juday: Does any of the nose art, you remember, anything really stand out to you? Any of the nose art that you've seen?

Nass: No.

Juday: I know that's a bizarre question, but --

Nass: No. I don't. I think they did more of that in Europe--they loved to paint those things and uh, we were under different rules apparently, until the war was almost over. There wasn't much nose art. We had to sell bonds instead [laughs].

Juday: Yeah. Um, were you--were you in the theater when the Doolittle Raiders had their mission, at all?

Nass: No. That occurred four months after the war started, after the Japanese, that April, I think, when the bombs--when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor in December, the following April is when they had that Doolittle Raid.

Juday: So did that, did that raid--how do you feel about the raid? Was that something that encouraged you? When you joined, was that something that you thought about? Because I know that was an impactful mission.

Nass: When it happened at the time, I thought, I think that boosted the morale of everybody in the country. And I remember when it happened, too. "Oh, those Japs are going to get it now!" Well they didn't for another two and a half years. And then I, at no time I ever thought I was going to be involved in that, either. But that's the way it worked out.

Juday: Um, while you were over there, while you were flying these missions and living the day to day life, um in Guam, um what kind of--what was it that kind of kept you going through, you know--just making it through day by day?

Nass: Well, we had movies to watch and that seven week period when we didn't fly, was in the sense, kind of boring. We watched these guys piling up their missions, and then once in a while when one crew didn't come back, then we didn't feel so bad [laughs]. But, uh, by the time the war was over, why by that time, they had built a USO Center and all kinds of things. But there wasn't much there when we first got there, but tents. We as air crew got to live in Quonset huts. But the people that worked on airplanes and the ground crew always lived in tents.

Kottwitz: You mentioned in one of your letters, meeting Bob Hope? Did you meet Bob?

Nass: Yup. He came to Pratt, when we were training in Pratt --

Kottwitz: Okay.

Nass: In the hanger, yeah.

Kottwitz: But not when you were in --

Nass: No. We had uh, one traveling group came over, but I can't remember who they were. It was a singing and dancing group, that sort of thing. But Bob Hope came to one of the hangars in Pratt one time. And we all stood in the hangar and watched him. That was funny. He was a sport.

Kottwitz: Where were you when--or how did you hear about President Roosevelt dying?

Nass: We got messages in two ways, we had a--there was a public address system throughout the air field on Guam, and there was a bulletin board from--put up from where we lived in the Quonset hut to where we ate in the mess hall. They always had this bulletin board and that's where we learned about that. And I honestly don't remember much about how that affected us at all other than we knew he had died.

Kottwitz: Mhmm.

Nass: And even when the war ended, we didn't do much. There isn't much, there was nothing to do on Guam [laughs]. You know, there was no streets to run into like they did in New York, that sort of thing, we just, just thanked God it's over! That's all.

Kottwitz: Did you fly any more missions after the war to like deliver food or drop food?

Nass: Yeah. One mission, we flew a week after the war ended. They put a platform, two platforms in our two bomb bays loaded with uh, oh, food and cigarettes and I don't know what was all in those two platforms. And then we took off, and then we hunted for this prisoner of war camp. And we hunted, and we hunted. And finally, somebody up in front spotted it. And we flew over it once to make sure we had the right spot. And then we lined up and we flew over again about 500 feet above the ground and we opened up the bomb bays and out went these two platforms with these parachutes on. And we told, "Do not drop it in camp! Drop it outside the camp. We don't want to kill anybody now if the chute doesn't open." And we did, and I couldn't see an awful lot from the upper dome, but I could see through the side of the window there that the--that we could see guys running out of the gate. Yeah, so that made me feel good, and the next thing was uh, we had a mountain to get over and that bothered me more 'cause we were so low

and uh, we had to come in over the water to this P.O.W. camp and then get over this mountain. And that was, made me more nervous, 'cause--and I talked to the pilot after we got home, I said, "What did you think about that mountain in front?" And he says, "That made me uneasy!" He said, "We pushed that throttle and pushed it [laughs]. My hand was hurting and I didn't know why until we got over that mountain!"

Kottwitz: Do you remember the name of the camp?

Nass: No, I don't. Nope. There were others assigned to go up there then too –

Kottwitz: Mhmm.

Nass: And uh, we had never done anything like that, of course, and we didn't know how it would even work, would the chutes get caught on the plane, and we'd be dragging them? I mean, it was just a touch and go. We were glad when they disappeared and saw them go down there. And, uh, I never saw them get either.

Kottwitz: But that was near Tokyo?

Nass: No, I don't know where we were. No, we had looked for so long in the general area, and then all of a sudden somebody spotted it and uh, I have no idea where that was to this day. There's nothing in my notes and nothing that the navigator ever sent me that indicated which one it was, either. So, it would have been kind of fun to know that --

Kottwitz: Mhmm.

Nass: And if we knew somebody that was in that camp after the war. But that never worked out.

Juday: I'm sure they would have been a little nervous, too, seeing a B-29 come in with the bomb bay doors open, so--

Nass: Yeah [laughs]. Well, I think by that time, they knew the war was over.

Juday: Yeah.

Nass: And I think they were relieved to see it.

Juday: When you were, when you were over there, on Guam, was there anything that you did for good luck, or are you or any of your crew members, that you can remember, you know, before you fly on a mission?

Nass: Yeah. My crew chief was a Master Sergeant, and he always gave us dimes. Every time we went on a mission, and then when we got back, we'd give him the dime back. That's what we did and it was--that's just what he did. And Spinney (sp??) is long since dead, but he was a nice guy [clears throat].

Juday: That's different. Could you describe what a typical day would be like? You said in over air crews there is the down day when there is not really much going on and then there is a mission

day. Could you describe what it was like on a typical day for, say you guys weren't flying--your seven weeks, what a typical day would be like? Or did you like, did you get the chance to sleep in?

Nass: Oh yeah, you were on your own. Nobody bothered you other than if they needed somebody for a mission. It was just a matter of going to eat and wanting--the mess hall was a half a block away. You'd linger over that, and then come back and we'd play blackjack for hours at a time. We'd sit on the--straddle the bunk and play blackjack. Or we had kind of a miniature, tiny little library there. I think I read every book in there [laughs]. But, it was boring, it was boring.

Juday: Now, mission days?

Nass: Mission days were different. We learned about the mission, they called--we learned about it on the bulletin board and through the public address system. All they said was that there will be a briefing, let's say, at about eleven o'clock. And 500 of us would assemble in this big room, and we'd find out all the details of the mission: the weather, the bomb load, where we were going, and all that stuff [clock chimes in background]. And they'd close the briefing with a prayer, and uh, then we'd go put on our old clothes, jump on the truck and they'd take us onto the airplane we were flying in. It took me an hour then, with the rest of the gunners. The whole crew was there and we'd check out everything. I had to make sure everything worked properly and that took about an hour. I just found my checklist as to what I had to do.

Juday: Oh!

Nass: I don't know how I got it done in an hour. But it was my responsibility, because I was a Senior Gunner, everything better be working [clears throat]. And then we would go back, and the mission--I remember to Tokyo, the third one, we were--each bomber was assigned one minute for take-off. And we were assigned exactly at six o'clock to go, which would put us over the target about two the next morning. And so, ah, after you got back, you went to the mess hall. Every time there was a mission, we were fed steak and eggs, which I love! But I had just a little trouble eating them then, 'cause you know what was in store. And then we go back to the barracks and we were required to be there one hour before takeoff. So we, about four-thirty, we'd 'time to go', let's hop in the trucks, and we'd grab our--oh, we had a flashlights that we'd checked a thousand times that afternoon to make sure it was working, we had a canteen we filled with water at the mess hall, and we had a .45 pistol that we had always strapped under our armpit. And that was interesting too. We had no reason to have a pistol, 'cause there was no place you could go if you were shot down in Japan, like in Europe. And we figured out, finally, that we were supposed to shoot ourselves. Because if you landed in Japan, and the civilians got a hold of you, and we were told that they are going to beat you to death. They were waiting with axes and clubs. There was no capture, unless you could see, before you landed, the military was there to grab you. They never said it, but that's what we figured out the pistol was for. Only one crew out of the nineteen crews we lost in combat ever survived. And those were the guys we interviewed on that tape [referencing a DVD Nass's daughter produced for public television about his bomb group]. [Clears throat] And then of course, after we get--to get back to what we were talking about, uh--we get down, we had one stop before we went to the airplane and that was the equipment room, where you got your parachute, you got your "Mae West", which was this life saving jacket that you inflated, and what--a sustenance vest. That was the vest that you wore close to the body that had candy bars in it, fish hooks, signal mirrors,

junk to keep you alive, you know, if you ended up in the boat or the jungle somewhere. Then we got the airplane, and we sat around 'til about twenty minutes before our take-off time. It was funny how [rustling sound] we reacted to each other there. Sometimes we'd, everybody would sit by themselves. And other times we would sit in a group and interrupt each other with nervous chatter. We never knew what you ah, what you--the mental attitude of these guys were when you got there [clears throat]. About twenty minutes, the pilot would say, "Let's go guys!" We'd climb in, start the engines, join the line and away we go.

Juday: You mentioned, uh, on mission days, you'd do steak and eggs. Um, in general, what was your impression of the uh, uh the mess hall--the food at the mess hall?

Nass: I never complained throughout my career, that the mess, that the food was bad. I, they always say, "Oh, Spam!" and that sort of thing. I never minded the food. We had uh, that was another thing, too, uh, they--we had packages of food that we took along. A truck would come by each airplane and drop off your food, which we would put in the back of the airplane, outside of the area where it was pressurized so it would stay cold. [coughing] And we'd eat that after we left the target, we knew it was safe to get out. The tail gunner would come out of his hole back there--he'd come in the room with us, and he'd bring all the stuff in. And he'd bring, we always had two cans of grapefruit juice, which I HATED! But, boy did that taste good, because it had frozen then and it was like slush and you were so thirsty that it was so wonderful. And we had peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, or bologna sandwiches, that sort of thing. Towards the end of the war, one of the last missions, they came out with a big iron box instead, off the truck. We said, "What's this?" They said, "These are" (they didn't call them TV dinners) "these are heated meals, now you guys. You just plug it in." And so we stuck that tin box out there after we left the target and he came in with this tin box, we plugged it in and heated these trays of food! That was great stuff! [laughter] But came along after probably uh, two, three weeks before the war was over. But uh, that's how we ate and we were pretty hungry by that time. And then you got the appetite back, when you knew the worst was over, you just had a six hour long boring ride back, most of the time.

Juday: Were you able to enjoy the food?

Nass: Yup, yeah! It wasn't bad at all.

Juday: When I was in, there were, we referred to them as "box nasties". [laughter] So, apparently you had better food than I did! Um, when you were on Guam for a year, were you able to take leave?

Nass: Yeah,

Juday: When you were on Guam?

Nass: I took one, uh-- mission they flew an airplane to Hawaii from Guam and it was fifteen people. And they all had to have a certain criteria that they had met in order to go there. And that was probably a my-our, a month or two before the war ended. And uh, I didn't get on it, and uh, I knew a guy that had gotten on it that had less missions than me. And I was talking about it around the barracks, and this one said, "Why don't you do something about it? You got more missions than that guy!" So I went up to headquarters and said, "Hey! Look at my record."

They looked it up. "Oh, yeah, you, you can go!" And they kicked the other guy off and put me on! And so, I went to Honolulu and had a week's rest there and had a great time. The bad part of it--you had to go back again. But, I did get a break there.

Juday: Were you just able to take leave just that one time?

Nass: That one time, yeah, and only fifteen guys, and I don't know how-- there wasn't much leave-taking.

Kottwitz: How often did you get mail from home?

Nass: Oh, my mother would write almost as much as I did.

Kottwitz: Hmm, hmm.

Nass: But, you, you got packages of food once in a while, but I didn't remember that I had to do this until I long since had gotten home and I was reading one of my letters. What we had to do was, we had to request that our family send us stuff. We couldn't just, my mother couldn't just pack up a box and send it. It had to be by request. So I would write I would like some chocolate chip cookies. And then she had to take the letter down to the post office and show that to the postmaster when she took the cookies in the box. [dog barking] That was a requirement, and probably every other time that it came, it was green. And inedible because it had been in a boat for a month. They shipped all that stuff by boat.

Juday: Yeah.

Nass: But some stuff came through pretty-pretty nicely.

Kottwitz: What was the purpose for having to have the request?

Nass: I don't know. I think it, it probably cut the uh, the uh shipping --

Kottwitz: -- the volume --

Nass: Everybody, every mother had--would have sent something every day, you know, to their kid. Otherwise, I suppose.

Juday: That is true. Oh, my mind kind of drifted off, I was thinking of something else. Um, so you served until April 16, 1946. Um, when you got out, um, the war was over, um--was it your, I guess um, was it your wish to get out? Did you want to stay in or did you, "I'm done."

Nass: I wanted out. [chuckling] I had had enough. I never really, it wasn't distasteful, but I just never liked the military that much. So I got out, and about six months after I was out, a fellow came to the lumber yard one time. My dad had a lumber yard, and I was working there in the office. And the, I saw this brown car pull up, or grey car, a military truck-car. There was a Major sitting in the back seat; I could see that through the window. And this Corporal came in. And he said, "Weren't you in the service?" I said, "Yeah." "You were in the Air Force; I got your record here." I says, "Oh, yeah. Yeah, I was." "The Major would like to talk to you

outside." I says, "Yeah, I'll talk to him, have him come in." He says, "Well, you have to come out there." I says, "That's the end of the discussion." [throat clearing] And I never got together with him, and then he wouldn't come in. So that was the end of the recruitment to get me back into the service. I wouldn't have gone anyway, but it kind of pissed me off! [laughter]

Juday: You were a civilian, so, I understand.

Nass: Yeah!

Juday: Um, how did you, when you, when you uh got out, how did you feel about leaving the military? You said you were ready, but, I mean, how did it make you feel as far as, you know, your efforts -- your efforts towards the war, the things that you did, and you were now going to transition uh, to civilian life. How did that make you feel?

Nass: Well, I guess you felt you did your duty and uh, in a way, people always say "Thank you for your service." You know, you heard that a thousand times, you probably have, too. But, I always tell those people, "You know, thank you for saying that, but I didn't have a choice." It wasn't that I, I'm not a hero, I didn't want to be uh like the movie stars, with their portrait, and everybody couldn't wait to sign up. I wasn't like that. I signed up for one reason only, so I could get into the Air Force, rather than the reasons I told you before. But, just, that was the way it is.

Juday: Yeah. What was it like when you came home?

Nass: Well, there was one part I won't tell you about. But, otherwise, when I got home about eleven o'clock at night, my uh--four of my buddies were waiting for me. They had been in the army and they had gotten discharged already from Europe. And that made me feel good. And uh, a couple, the others, I'm not going to tell you what happened on tape. I'll tell you afterwards, but uh, it was just nice to get home. And to see my old buddies waiting there and I went and visited with my parents for a little while. And then we went all downtown, and went to Owen's Eats and had hamburgers and had a nice time there.

Juday: So you came in um, on a bus, on a train?

Nass: No, I, I uh, left Camp McCoy about seven o'clock and got to Columbus/Watertown about eleven-about nine o'clock and it was raining and cold in April. And just the uh, the [inaudible] was in there yet, and I can remember just that one light bulb hanging down there yet. And I called my mother--then they came and got me. [coughing] And then came home. Nobody, no band! [laughter] But just my buddies were there.

Juday: Yeah. That's always good. Um, what did you do after you came home and you were able to visit with everybody? Um, where did you kind of go from there?

Nass: Well, my dad had a lumber yard. And I, I worked there, and eventually I managed it, but it was a dying business. We sold ice and coal. Can you imagine trying to sell that now? So finally, uh, when I was thirty-nine years old, we uh, I told my dad, "We got to get rid of this thing. And uh, or we're going to lose everything." So we auctioned everything off, and I had not gone to college, so I had no extra education. So I sold advertising for a little while until I met a guy one

time who said, "Why don't you consider being a broker, stock broker." So I wrote the test, it took me all summer to study it. And so I then went to work for Investor's Diversified Services in Minneapolis, which is now Ameriprise. And I worked for them for twenty-six years. [clock chiming] And that taught me a lesson, too. When things look so black, I sat there with no business with a wife and three kids and she wasn't working. What was going to happen to me? And it was the best thing that ever happened to me. I'd have starved to death with that lumber yard. But because I, [knocking] and I had no knowledge that I could sell anything. When I was in the lumber yard, people wanted something. Here, I had to persuade them to invest their money with money, and hope that they didn't lose it all. And it wasn't easy, but I kept at it and kept at it and all of a sudden, my goll it took off. I made a lot of money. And that's what saved me, and it taught me a lesson. When things look so black, if you can see it as an opportunity, instead of a curse, if you can just see the light there, why things always work out. I wouldn't have anything now, like I've got. I had two houses, I had an airplane, all that stuff just 'cause I was kicked in the tail with that business. So, it worked out fine.

Juday: When did you retire?

Nass: Nineteen sixty-six. But I--boss told me I wouldn't know the difference, [laughter] 'cause I was only working one or two days a week the last three years. And now my boss doesn't, I just called him two weeks ago, he lives in down in the south of Tucson. I don't think he'll be around much longer, he has heart failure. But he used to laugh at me when I exercised. He isn't laughing now. [More laughter]

Juday: When you got out, did you um receive any Veteran's benefits, anything like that from the V.A.?

Nass: Yeah, I went to school for a year and a half to learn how to draw and build houses which tied in with the lumber yard. And uh, I designed the house--one of the houses we lived in, built it. We built four houses in, during the course of our progression. My wife and I married after the war, had kids and moved from a little dinky house to a house on Center Street. Moved across the street there, and then finally when they were all gone, moved to this house for retiring and, now here I sit. [chuckling]

Kottwitz: So, were you dating your wife before you enlisted?

Nass: No, I didn't even know her. Nadine, I'm eighty-nine and Nadine is eighty three--eighty four now. She's eighty four. She was still, when I got out at twenty, she was four--she was fifteen. I couldn't buy a beer yet! I went in at eighteen, got back at twenty. Still couldn't buy a beer! [laughter] But I met her in the choir loft. God put her in front of me in the church choir one day, and He says, "She's my gift to you forever." And, by golly, we been married sixty, in June it will be sixty-two years, which she has no recollection of.

Juday: Sixty-two. [sighing] And you said you have three kids?

Nass: Three kids, yeah.

Juday: Um --

Nass: The senior--my son's sixty. He's a physical therapist and emergency medical technician. He works for the University of Wisconsin. My daughter is a television writer and producer and my son, who was a stock broker, too. But then, he never got married, so he finally quit he and he never--he uh sells wine for World Markets in Phoenix three days a week. [chuckling]

Juday: Sounds like a good gig! Going back to the uh, the military portion, what, what medals or citations did you ever earn while you were in?

Nass: You know I don't really remember, Dan. I got a air medal, a Oak Leaf Cluster. I don't know what else, good conduct, you know, stuff like that.

Juday: [laughing] That's probably good!

Nass: I suppose Pacific Theater. They cooked up medals for anything, really.

Juday: Air Force . . .

Nass: [coughing] I don't remember, it's all in my, I suppose, my discharge papers.

Juday: While you were serving, did you receive any injuries?

Nass: Nope. Never got a scratch, not a scratch. [knocking]

Juday: Um, did you uh, continue any uh close friendships with any of your crew or anyone that you knew while you were in the military?

Nass: Yeah. We had reunions, but those didn't start until probably forty years after. And uh, uh, most of the crew we found, and we had reunions and now there are just two of us left. And that was interesting, too. And I didn't know that my pilot had a nervous breakdown 'til forty years afterwards! I learned it at a reunion because we were told he was allergic to coral.

Kottwitz: Hmm.

Nass: I think they didn't want us to know that an officer had a breakdown like that after four missions.

Juday: Hmm.

Nass: But, ah, my bombardier said, "No, heck, I lived with the guy. He was, he was nuts! He went nuts! He just went berserk!" So, he was shipped home. And then I found out years and years later, in fact, about three years ago what happened to him. He got back in the Air Force and in nineteen fifty-seven, he was flying a DC3 to the east coast, and he got into a terrible storm, and there were four others that flew on the airplane with him, and he uh crashed into a mountain on landing on the east coast. His name was Ed, Ed Cosick (sp?) and was killed. So, I don't know how I got the information, but somebody knew about it.

Juday: Hmm. Um, now you were talking about the reunion, um, and we had done some research out in the field, um and it seemed like, are they still going to continue on with their reunions, or?

Nass: No. The last one was in Washington, D.C. probably five, six years ago. Six years ago, now. And, uh, there was nobody left to do it. The kids were doing it the last two times. My kids ran the one before that in New Orleans, which we thought was going to be the last one. 'Cause we got all twenty-nine fellas out, I'll show you that afterwards, to sign a big poster. But then the guy cooked up one more in Washington, D.C., and that was our last one. And there were eighteen of us, then.

Juday: Hmm. Wow.

Nass: And now, I think, I--the kids were going to continue on, but I never heard anything they did to have a, you know, it's just another generation of [coughing] people still meeting once in a while, but I don't think I ever did.

Nass: Yeah. [coughing]

Juday: Did you ever join any Veteran's organizations when you came home?

Nass: I might have, I think I joined the Legion for year or two, but I, I didn't stay in it.

Juday: Legion here, in Jefferson?

Nass: Yeah. No, I never, I just didn't want to play soldier in any form.

Juday: Hmm. Looking back, um, how do you feel about your military experience, and your war experience?

Nass: I really wouldn't have traded it for anything. But I wouldn't want to do it again, either. That's about the way I could sum it up. It--and I wished almost sometimes that every kid would have a year or two of that. Just to learn how to uh, take care of yourself. In a sense, you aren't taking care of yourself, but you're taught how to.

Juday: Hmm.

Nass: I had a granddaughter living here. She lived like a pig and she's a Four-Oh student. I think all [inaudible], I guess. But had she been in the service for a year, why that room never would have looked like it did. But, when she left, it looked just like the day when she came. She lived with me for four months. Great gal!

Juday: So, so as far what it's meant to you in your life, is it, do you think that uh, um serving in the Army Air Corp and, and your time, um, overseas, um, during war, um that it's had a big impact on your life as far as how --

Nass: Yeah, I think it did.

Juday: -- as far as how it shaped you.

Nass: Yeah. I never did anything in sports. Never played football, basketball, I wasn't good enough for that. But it taught me something, and I think it was unique in the fact that it was in the Air Force, and you were with a crew [throat clearing] and you're dependant on each other. And you get to really like each other, too. And do things together, that part, I know the guys that were in the infantry, that were my friends, they don't have that feeling. But, we stayed together for years and years and years afterwards. And we talked to each other on the phone. It was, you get to be a tightly knit bunch.

Juday: Hmm. You kind of touched on this, but what would you tell someone um, who didn't know anything about war, or combat, or how would you um, I hate to say "civilians" (no offense), um, but I guess how would you describe it?

Nass: Well, like I said before, I wouldn't want to do it again. But, the war, the way we fought it, it so different than the way things go now. You don't even know who your enemy is. Or in what form he is, or what he's going to do to you. We knew what to expect. And we knew how to compensate for it. But now, you can drive along the road, and suddenly a bomb goes off, and there's nobody within sight. It's a way different type of war, and it's different. I can see why, psychology, these people uh go to pieces. I had a few nightmares when I got home. My wife would wake me up, because I was yelling. But that went away after a couple of years [coughing]. I was always yelling at the right gunner that he wasn't seeing those guys coming in!! [chuckling] "Jack! Jack!" I kept yelling at Jack. Well, Jack was my right gunner. He was, they were coming and he wouldn't shoot! "Jack, shoot! Jack, shoot!" And then she'd pound on me and I woke up. But that went away.

Juday: Did you have any experience while you were on a mission where your right gunner didn't see a plane or was that?

Nass: No! Not that I can remember. That all must have been [laughter] afterwards.

Juday: Hmm.

Nass: Jack was a pretty good guy.

Juday: Oh!

Nass: They all were.

Juday: Was there, was there anything that surprised you about um, I supposed there would probably be a bunch of things, but, anything specific that really surprised you about your, your service? Or maybe, surprised you about yourself, your capabilities or --?

Nass: Well, I, I learned about myself. I was the 'nerd' in high school. I was dumb, and uh, did no sports. And didn't have an awful lot of friends. And, I was put into a position in the Air Force, where you better get along with people. And I did, and it got to the point, where I knew just about how to do it. And it paid off for me, years later, when I got into the selling business. It was when I went to work for Ameriprise. You better learn how this business works or you are going to starve to death. 'Cause it was all commission. [beeping] And the boss told me, he said, "You're going to [knocking] get paid exactly what you're worth." And I remembered that.

And it taught me how to watch reactions in people's body language and how they lived and what was on the tables when I walked in the house and the pictures on the wall. All that taught me stuff about how to talk to people. Whether I should say, "Let's pile up some money, here!", or "Would you like to accumulate some funds for later on in life?" You just change your language to the type of person you are talking to. It taught me a lot [throat clearing]. How to get along with people, and being nineteen years old and telling four gunners that were older than you, "this is why you do it, 'cause it's my ass!", wasn't easy, either. But it taught me how to do it.

Juday: Hmm.

Nass: And how to listen when the pilot says, "Nass, [knocking] let us know when you shoot those guns!"

Juday: [chuckling] I love it! Um, what would you want people that listen to the interview to know, in general or specifically?

Nass: Hmm. Well, I suppose to who's listening, if its kids, that they occasionally give a little thought to what happened seventy years ago, to the twelve million people. And, uh, appreciate the fact [clock chiming] that you didn't have to learn Japanese or German, because of, not necessarily because what I alone did, but what all those guys did, I guess. 'Cause people, kids now a days, don't give much of a thought, nor do most people anymore. We're just a dying breed. And, uh, that's about all I could say about that. Give a little thought as to why you're still here and why you're in this beautiful country. I travelled all over the world, my wife and I, down through the years. We've seen unbelievable sights. And I wished people would get a chance to do that. Then you'll appreciate what you got here.

Juday: Kind of, to ah, as a caveat to that, um, why was it important for you to do ah, an oral interview? Or to agree to the oral history um interview?

Nass: Because I want people to know something about this. Not for my sake, but as I said before, I think we owe it, when you have an experience like that, that's you didn't even ask for, that you had to do, and how unique it was, and what it was like, and why we did it, so you could have all this. I think kids should know all that. [throat clearing] And that's why I scolded my friend for not doing it.

And am ashamed to say that I didn't do much of it either, until I saw that ad in the paper other than what we did through that tape. But that was so much for it. Lori, I went to find people and that was a great thing to do for that. [coughing]

Juday: Do you have anything else that you want to ad that we haven't talked about yet?

Nass: Not that I can think of now, that, that would fit something being taped. [laughter]

Juday: Do you have anything, any questions that we haven't covered? We've done in an hour and a half, I believe.

Kottwitz: No.

Juday: I have one thing. In your letters that you sent home, um, you always signed it "Sonny Boy".

Nass: Oh, did I? [laughter]

Juday: Yes, yeah you did. And, and it, something about that caught my attention. Um, or almost always signed it, "Sonny Boy". Was there a reason for that that you can remember?

Nass: Well, let's--the last part of your question answers that, "that you can remember!" No, I have no idea why I did that.

Juday: Okay, it just caught my attention, I was like, "I have to ask". Nothing that we --

Kottwitz: Umm, umm.

Juday: Well, I want to thank you for doing the interview. This is fantastic. I can understand why in the, um, in our paperwork, it, it lists things to bring, like water and tissues. I got a little choked up there! And I had to take a moment. But I want to thank you for um doing this interview with us, and Connie, thank you for helping out.

Kottwitz: Thank you, Don.

Nass: You're welcome. I appreciate meeting you people.

Juday: Okay.

Nass: Thank you for doing it.

Juday: And I guess that's the end of the interview.

[End of Interview]