

Marty_Schlesinger_September 13, 2006

Marty Schlesinger: I brought you in this room and I thought you might want to take, you know, photos of this and...

Shannon Berndt: We would want to. It is Wednesday, July 12, 2006. We are at the home of Marty Schlesinger in Las Vegas, Nevada. My name is Shannon Berndt and our camera person is Ed Selzman [SP] 00:21. Thank you so much for helping us do this Veterans Oral History project. It is an exciting project to listen to the veterans who want to tell their stories. But let us go back a little ways before your career in the Army Air Corps. Where were you born?

Marty Schlesinger: In the Bronx, New York.

Shannon Berndt: And did you grow up there?

Marty Schlesinger: I grew up in the Bronx and then we moved to Brooklyn and---there is where I went into the service in Brooklyn in 1943.

Shannon Berndt: What were you doing before you went into the service?

Marty Schlesinger: Well, I was a sales rep. I was in the brassiere business. I worked for a manufacturer and I used to call on retail stores.

Shannon Berndt: You were drafted, right?

Marty Schlesinger: I was drafted. I had a wife. I had a child. I was married in 1940. And my son was born in 1943. He is a veteran, too, my son.

Shannon Berndt: I am surprised that you were drafted, but...

Marty Schlesinger: They ran out of single guys in the age group. I do not know if you know how the draft works.

Shannon Berndt: No, not really.

Marty Schlesinger: Well, the draft board is set up and they are given quotas. That is the way it was during World War II. They were given quotas of so many people from this area. Now they apparently had lost or run out of guys in that age group, so they got to the next---they got to the married men in a certain age group and I was---that would be one of them, so consequently---as a matter of fact when I got my first notice my wife was pregnant. So we---she went to---I was out on the road and out of town. She went to the draft board. She said, look I am pregnant, can you wait 'til the baby is born? They said, of course, you know, we could do that, which they did. My son was born in March of '43 and I did not go in 'til July of '43.

Shannon Berndt: Did you choose your branch of service or did they tell you you were going to go?

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Marty Schlesinger: I did not choose nothing. I did not volunteer for anything [chuckles].

Shannon Berndt: So what branch of service did you go into?

Marty Schlesinger: I went into the Army Air Force. I was drafted into the Air Force and I took Army Air Force basic training.

Shannon Berndt: And tell me about those first days of basic training.

Marty Schlesinger: Miserable. Because it was in the middle of the summer, July and August, and we did marching and going to lectures. In the heat you stand at attention for--at retreat, parades, you know, at night when you take the flag down from the base and we would stand at attention in heat and humidity. If you know what Florida is like in the middle of the summer.

Shannon Berndt: And where were you at?

Marty Schlesinger: Miami Beach. Yeah. The one good thing that we lived in hotels. But the hotels were fairly small. We had a small hotel. The army had taken over the whole—all hotels in Miami Beach and they used them as barracks. And we had---there were four guys to a room. Now you had to keep that room pretty neat and you had to keep your clothes in line, all buttoned, your shoes laced, your extra shoes that you were not wearing. And when they called you in the morning and you got up for reveille, these four guys want to get into that shower and you cannot leave a drop of water in the sink because then it would come around with white gloves, check the moldings on the doorways and everything so that room had to be spotless, you know. That was part of the training, and marching and lectures and stuff like that.

Shannon Berndt: How did you get your job assignment.

Marty Schlesinger: You mean---no, they gave you a choice. Asked me if I wanted to go to engineering school, armorer, or radio. And radio sounded good to me and they gave me an aptitude test and apparently the radio and the aptitude test, you know, and that is where I wound up, and at radio school in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, where you sat learning code all day long. You have a key and you got a headset on for six, eight hours a day sometimes.

Shannon Berndt: How long did that training take?

Marty Schlesinger: Man, let us see, I went there in November to---through May, I think. That would be about six months of radio school. You learned to repair radios, you learned code, you learned procedures, you know, combat procedures as well as civilian, and you gotta learn all this stuff, and you had to learn how to repair a radio if it went bad. You know in those days they had tubes and your transmitter had tubes that were that big,

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you know, in the old days. And then you had also a crystal set that the pilot---crystal, it was crystal radio. It had a certain coded crystal radio in there so if the plane, something went wrong, you were shot down, that plane had a---the radio had a charge in it that would blow up the radio.

Shannon Berndt: So is that what you did in your job was you became a radio operator?

Marty Schlesinger: I became a radio operator, part of a crew member. Well, the crew, I did not crew up 'til after my school they sent me to further advanced school where I learned radar and did cross country flying in practice. We towed gliders, we dropped paratroopers. You know, this was all part of the training.

Shannon Berndt: How long did your total training take?

Marty Schlesinger: Let us see. If we left in May, let us see, May, yeah, in May we went down to Missouri and we got through in December for that year. We got orders to go overseas, 1944.

Shannon Berndt: Wow. It took some time. So you got through all your training. Where did you finally end up at? Did you end up---where was your job assignment at?

Marty Schlesinger: I was a radio operator. We wound up---it was the 2nd _____ (07:54) Squadron, which was a base---it was not a base, it was an airstrip that was on the---it was west of the Arakan Hills. Right over the hills there was Burma and the British Army were fighting the Japanese there and we were supplying them with things. So we fly out of the strip to a place called Doazari [SP] 08:25 was the name of this area where this airstrip was. And then we moved on from there to other places. We moved to Chittagong. We moved to Bhamo in Burma, up to Kunming in China, up to---wound up in Chungking which at that time was the capitol of China. Chiang Kai-shek lived in Chungking. And from there the airstrip in Chungking was a place Pei Shi [SP] 08:58 and from there I finally got my orders to go home. That was a high point in the end because I had flown, you know, over 600 hundred combat hours. So that was a high point, being scheduled to go home _____ (09:23) my orders here, you know.

Shannon Berndt: So you actually---you saw combat.

Marty Schlesinger: Huh. Very little, really. But it was combat. You were in combat because there were Japanese around. We were very lucky. We got fighter protection from the British. The British had Spitfire fighter protection for us. We were flying unarmed aircraft so we were sitting ducks for a Japanese fighter plane, for the Zeroes, and this is what you worried about. And you were to fly over Japanese lines to drop stuff to the Americans had an outfit which is now the CIA but at that time was called the OSS, Office of Strategic Services. And it was organized guerillas. They would---we would drop men behind Jap lines. They would organize the local people called the Chindits in Burma and the Kachins. And they would organize them. And this---these are the

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guerillas that defeated the Japanese really, plus the British Army. In the British Army there were Gherkas, there were Sikhs, there were West Africans, Indians, you know, and British.

Shannon Berndt: So you did not just haul cargo, you hauled soldiers also.

Marty Schlesinger: Oh, yeah, we hauled soldiers. We towed gliders.

Shannon Berndt: [Softly] Wow.

Marty Schlesinger: That was a disaster. [Laughter]

Shannon Berndt: [Laughter]

Marty Schlesinger: It did not work.

Shannon Berndt: You had---your group had a name, right?

Marty Schlesinger: Second's Commie Carba Squad [SP] 11:10.

Shannon Berndt: But was it not part of the Flying Tigers?

Marty Schlesinger: Yeah. Well, it was---actually the Flying Tigers—we adopted that thing but we were the 14th Air Force is what we were, and if you look at the stuff like I showed you, just the 14th Air Force Association, here for instance, is the roster. Do you know the Flying Tigers of the 14th Air Force Association. There are in here names of fellows that were with the AVG, very few, because most of them are gone, you know. There is Pexell [SP] 12:02, I do not know if these names register with you, Pexell, [SP] 12:06, there was a guy lived in town here. He died. His name was Duke Edmond [SP] 12:18. This is the roster of the AVG back here. I forgot how I got this book. It is a very odd story. It is a very interesting story.

Shannon Berndt: Share that.

Marty Schlesinger: My girlfriend and I were on a cruise to Alaska and I am walking along the street in Alaska and I got my cap on that says Real Flying Tigers and a guy comes over to me on the street. He says, were you with the AVG? So I said to him, I said, what do you know about AVG? He was kind of young. Mostly young people do not know. He said, I am sort of a history buff. He says, you know, he says, I have an awesome craft shop. He says, I do some painting. I would like to show you something. Would you like to come up to my place? This is Ketchikan, Alaska. I says sure, so my girlfriend and I, we go up. And he pulls out a painting of a P-40 fighter plane. This is his painting and he says, do you know Charlie Bond? I says, no. Well, Charlie Bond was one of the original AVGIs. I did not know him. He says, well, he wrote a book in conjunction with a history professor from the University of Texas. He said and he is still alive, Charlie Bond. So when he shows me the painting then he comes out with this

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book. He says, this was his card, that is his name, Terry Pyles. He ended up _____ (14:07) a book, cover painting by Terry Pyles.

Shannon Berndt: Cool.

Marty Schlesinger: And this book was autographed by Charlie Bond.

Shannon Berndt: Oh, cool.

Marty Schlesinger: I never knew the man, I never saw him. But he said, I want you to have this, and he gave me the book.

Shannon Berndt: Oh, how nice. That is...

Marty Schlesinger: Yeah. And I looked up the roster of the AVG. I know a few of those _____ (14:34) in there, you know. And one of the guys, like I said, Duke Edmond, here...

Shannon Berndt: _____ (14:47)

Marty Schlesinger: He is another guy _____ (14:49) yeah, he was divorced. He was a terrific guy. I see his wife, you know, I saw her Memorial Day. Yeah, she comes to all the things. Matter of fact I got pictures I have taken with her. Very lovely woman. But that---is that not an odd thing?

Shannon Berndt: That is awesome. That is an awesome thing!

Marty Schlesinger: Yeah, it is. Very unusual story.

Shannon Berndt: Were there any casualties in your unit?

Marty Schlesinger: Yeah. We lost---I think we lost---actually we had a very good record and I do not---as far as losses we had a very good record of delivering supplies to---into the British and to the Americans. We lost two planes that I know of. And one crew with the exception of the radio operator got back---got back to the base. This was over the jungles in Burma. And they were able to get back. And they think---they bailed out and the co-pilot, who later I flew with him a couple of missions, he thinks that the guy did not bail out with them, that he went in the back of the plane and he was scared, you know, and he kind of hid and went down with the plane. He was from Iron Mountain, Michigan. Nice young guy. And then we lost another guy also. But we lost one plane by enemy, you know, the Japanese Zeroes shot them down. But the casualties were very low, you know. In fact we were flying unarmed aircraft, you know. You know, we were first to shoot back. But we were tough targets because of flying as low as we did. See, the fighter planes could not---they come into a dive to shoot the---they could not pull out of it without hitting the ground or maybe a mountain, and that is what happened a couple of times. Because, you know, as soon as we get over the mountains

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we were flying right on treetops and dropping our load, or if they had captured a strip from the Japanese, which in Burma there were several of them, then we would land. We were able to land.

Shannon Berndt: Were you ever fearful?

Marty Schlesinger: All the time [chuckles].

Shannon Berndt: All the time. That is good to know. [He continues to chuckle] Tell me about the food and the provisions that you used.

Marty Schlesinger: Terrible. [Chuckling] We ate---it was one period of time I think for about 30 days I ate K-rations. Now you know what K-rations are? It comes in a Cracker Jack box and they are marked B L D, breakfast, lunch, dinner. And they had cans. Well, the breakfast dish was cat food. Looks exactly, and smells exactly like cat food. _____ (18:04) for some _____ (18:04) fish. I would never eat that stuff. The lunch dish was the same can but it was cheese and it had little pieces of bacon in it. That was good. That we could eat. And dinner was the cat food again. Occasionally if we were to---we stopped at British---it was a time we were---at a strip that was the British---that was a British base and they fed us, did you ever eat mutton?

Shannon Berndt: Yes.

Marty Schlesinger: Do you like it?

Shannon Berndt: Not so well. Lamb is better than mutton.

Marty Schlesinger: Well, I love lamb chops. I ate mutton.

Shannon Berndt: Well, make sure you eat it hot.

Marty Schlesinger: Mutton is like from sheep who have died of old age. Did you ever eat mutton?

Ed Selzman [SP] 18:52: No.

Marty Schlesinger: I love lamb.

Shannon Berndt: Yeah. Not mutton.

Marty Schlesinger: Towards the end of the war they came out with what they called 10-in-1 rations, which were pretty good, but by that time I was at a pretty good base in Chungking, which was kind of like I said, the capitol of China, and we were fed by the Chinese and they were pretty good. The food there was not bad.

Shannon Berndt: Was it rice or...

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Marty Schlesinger: Was it what?

Shannon Berndt: Rice?

Marty Schlesinger: Rice, noodles, water buffalo meat...

Shannon Berndt: Oh.

Marty Schlesinger: ...which is very tasty.

Shannon Berndt: Oh, it is.

Marty Schlesinger: A little tough, but very tasty. And the Chinese would prepare it in such a way that it was pretty good.

Shannon Berndt: Very good. Did you have free time, and if you did, how did you--- what did you do in your spare time?

Marty Schlesinger: Mostly sleep. You know, you would get up at four, a quarter of five in the morning. You go to briefing before you took off. You get your orders, you get a piece of rice paper with secret codes on it. You kept radio silence when you went on your mission and then you get to color a---you know what a---there is what they call a Very pistol. You know what a Very pistol is? It is a pistol that shoots a flare. See, it has a muzzle like that, and if you were in distress somewhere, you have to have the right color. They come in colors and you had a sheet that gave you the codes of the day and what to say when you finished your mission when you called back into the---your base. Instead of saying, mission accomplished, there were certain codes that was printed on rice paper, because if you were forced down you eat it. You eat the rice paper.

Shannon Berndt: Oh, I see. How did you stay in touch with your family at home?

Marty Schlesinger: I wrote a letter every day. My son has all of them. My wife saved them. I lost my wife. But she saved every letter, which I did not know, until she died. And I found all these letters. And I gave them to my son. But I kept---and she would write to me all the time. Of course we did not get mail every day. I would get a batch of mail sometimes. There would be a few months' supply, you know.

Shannon Berndt: Did you celebrate the holidays in any special way?

Marty Schlesinger: Well, I am Jewish. And I will tell you a funny. I was in Chittagong. I was on detached service and it was Passover. And I did not know any other Jewish guys, so I went into the mess sergeant, I says, look, you know, we cannot eat bread, so you gotta bake matzos. He said, how do you bake matzos? You read the Old Testament, you know, it will tell you in Exodus how they---when they left Egypt and they took the flour and the water and the sun baked the matzos. He said, well, I will take-

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--I will do what I can. Well, he came out with a thing. He took the flour and the water and he came out like a salad bowl with---and my crew chief was Italian. He was Catholic. He did not practice his religion. So we got our few guys, you know, and we had sort of a so-called service, you know. But you did not think too much about religion there. I am not a religious guy but I do---I like being Jewish. {Chuckles}

Shannon Berndt: I hope that is true then. Tell me about your most memorable experience.

Marty Schlesinger: During the missions? Well there were several. There was one trip. We were in northern Burma and we had to transport mules and horses over The Hump—that's the Himalayan Mountains—to Canton, China. There was a big China offensive against the Japanese in the coastal cities. It was getting towards the windup of the war. And we put on these four animals and two Chinese soldiers and we collected their rifles and kept them up front—in the front, you know, in the cabin, the front cabin. We did not want any armed Chinese in the back of the airplane in case of an emergency. So we take off in the air with these animals. You are taking off a C-47. It takes off and the animals are slipping and jumping, you know. We finally get in the air with them and I am sitting at my position. It is the front of the airplane, here. My radio is in here. And a bolt that is here, and I hear stomping, right? And a hoof comes right through the bulkhead and there is an Australian horse and he is jumping up and down. And I open the cabin door and this horse is bleeding terribly and stomping. I am getting more scared with this stomping, and I said to Ray, my crew chief, let us see if we could knock this animal out. Is there any way we could knock him out? So I picked up one of the Chinese rifles and I take and I give him a shot in the head. Nothing happens. So I take my---I have a .45 pistol. So I take---I am going to shoot this animal, I said, bec---it's gonna cause us to crash, you know. And I put it right up against the horse's forehead. And the gun jams. [Laughter] Did not fire. So I finally went into the pilot—matter of fact he just passed away about a year ago. Name was George Pruitt. And I said, Cap'n, I says, what are you gonna do? He said, I am calling Kung Ming [SP] 25:36, they got a veterinary thing, Kung Ming [SP] 26:39, China. Kung Ming [SP] 25:41 was a very big base in China. He says, I do not know how to take that animal off, and then we will continue on to Canton. So he calls Kung Ming [SP] 25:49 and they tell him not to come in, to go on to Canton. He says, I am not going on with this animal jumping all over the place. He says, I am coming in. And we landed and sure enough, they send a six-by-six truck, the veterinary car, and I took the animal off, and we went on to Canton and delivered the animals. That was one experience. I had another where we were delivering ammunition to a British Spitfire base, an island in the Bay of Bengal called Akyab. If you look on a map you might see it. It was a Spitfire base. And we land there and there is nobody around. It is a mud strip. It is like, you know the monsoons? You know what the monsoons are like? You do not know what monsoons are like? Believe it. The mud on the strip was like that high. You land and you are taking off in that. And nobody was around. We looked at our watch. Four o'clock. Well, at four o'clock the British stop everything for tea. They were in there someplace having tea. So we walk into this tent that they are having tea. Well, come in, Yank, you know, join us. They had a big cheese, the cheese was that big. They had cheese and they had bread, which was terrible, and they were all drinking tea. Anyway,

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two fighter pilots were coming in for tea. Two Spitfire, young guys. And as they landed the second plane hit the first plane and he caught fire and bullets flying all over the place and we are ducking, you know, we hit his thing and we see that the pilot in the second plane jumps out of the plane to try to get over to pull the guy out but there was no chance and the guy burned to death. A young kid. Must have been a 19-year-old kid. They were terrific pilots, those British. That was a hell of an experience, too. That was in a combat area. I tell you we had an extra inch in a non-combat area.

Shannon Berndt: Okay.

Marty Schlesinger: We left Karachi on our way to refuel at a place called _____ (28:27). It is an Indian name. And we get into a monsoon. Thunder and ice and everything. And ice forms. Oh no, we stop at Agra. You know what is in Agra, India? The Taj Mahal. So I says to the pilot, let us see if we can stay over. I would like to go see the Taj Mahal. So the operations officer says, you guys gotta go, gotta keep going. They refuel and we take off and we fly, actually we buzzed the Taj Mahal and I am taking pictures, you know, of the Taj Mahal. And on the way to _____ (29:15) we head into a terrible storm and ice forms on the antennae and some of the wings, you know. And ice is---can be very dangerous. And we are bouncing around and I want to tell you that was more scary of anything I had ever been through in all my flying was that trip, which was in a non-combat area. And finally I am trying to contact the radio. I have no radio contact. The ice on the antenna---it just did not work. So the pilot and copilot decide they are going to turn around and go back. And we turned around and we go back and we break out to a little better weather and I finally contact the base there and the operations [very high pitched sound] excuse me. Hello. Hi. Belle, I have got some people here. Let me call you back. Okay. Bye. That is my girlfriend. She is going to be 90 years old.

Shannon Berndt: [Laughter]

Marty Schlesinger: Let me show you a picture of her. She is a nice looking lady. Anyway. We get into this storm and we go back and they call and said, okay to come in, and we get in there and the operations officer starts screaming at the pilot and copilot, why do we not come back sooner? You are taking a chance—the government paid \$9 million for that airplane and you got \$9,000 to train these people and you took a chance on destroying it? You should have come back sooner. Well, they got chewed out, but we got to see the Taj Mahal. So night we went into the Taj Mahal, which is a very interesting place. Course at that time they did not keep it so nice because the lagoons leading up to it, it stunk. You know, and you could see the water was all polluted. You know, I think now they probably take care of it. But it was a very interesting place to see. Do you know the story about the Taj Mahal? It was built in 1620. I think they had 20,000 building it. It was a tomb for a maharaja's wife who had died, and a matter of fact her coffin was made of marble, all marble embedded with rubies and jewels. It is a very--like I said it is a very interesting place. And that was a testimony to his beautiful wife. What else?

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Shannon Berndt: Well, let us see. What skills or lessons did you learn while you were in the service?

Marty Schlesinger: I learned never to volunteer [both chuckle], which I did not do. I learned _____ (32:47) their politics even in the service. And there are prejudices also, in the services. And it is just too bad because I like to think I was born without any of---I had a family that taught me up---you know, that everybody is a good human being, you know, and other than that---I had made a few friends. One of my best friends that I had made was the---was my engineer, the radio engineer, he was an Italian guy. I had mentioned to you. We had become very good friends. And we had not seen each other after the war. He had moved to Lemon Grove, California, and then I had moved to Los Angeles and we used to get together in San Diego. We used to---well, I will tell you another thing that might be interested---interesting. I went on the _____ (33:55) service. I do not know if you know what that is. They sent me to another outfit which was an air service group in Chittagong, India. And I had a---it was my crew chief, myself, a pilot by the name of Lt. Lawrence Brady, and a copilot whose name was Johnson—the crew chief and I were four of us. Now we were going to fly for this service group—whatever they needed we were going to be like the gofer, you might say, you know? And we had flown so we took guys on rest leave. We delivered high ranking officers to certain places and we would fly in and out of combat zones. If you took off from a combat zone—Chittagong was a combat zone—you got combat time and you went home if you had 650 combat hours. So anyway we flew with this Lt. Brady. And Lt. Brady was kind of a hotshot pilot. He was a Texan, a big, tall, good looking guy, and also a little reckless. And one day we were going off. We were supposed to go to Calcutta, which was a milk run even further back out of combat areas. So we get there. We were going to take off. It was late in the afternoon and we planned to stay over night in Calcutta. We were there to pick up an airplane engine I think, if I remember correctly. Anyway, Lt. Brady any---I checked my radios and Ray checks the engines and the rest of the aircraft, and the pilot and copilot come out. They go to briefing and he says, I do not think we ought to take off. There is a cut in the tire. So _____ (36:08) says, no, he says, I---we will get the tire fixed in Calcutta, you know, replace it. So Ray says, I am not going to go up in that airplane with that cut tire. So this guy Brady says---and Ray was about 5 foot 5 and this guy dressed 6 foot 4. He says, I order you—he was a first lieutenant—I order you to go on up in that airplane, and he says to him, I do not want to tell you the language he used, and he grabbed his bag and the crew chief was a little guy, you go. So then the copilot came over and said, maybe you do not want to go either. So I looked and I said, it does not look bad to me. So I went, you know, and I did the preflight coming back _____ (36:53) he taught me how to do that. Well this Lt. Brady on a couple of other instances that leave---we got into trouble because of recklessness. Anyway, we get called on it within about a month and the plane—I will show you a picture of the plane and the crew. The plane was called Dinah-Might. I think you might be interested. This is quite a story. There is a lot of junk here. It is me down here, that is what I looked like. That is a big difference, huh?

Shannon Berndt: Yes. Just amazing.

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Marty Schlesinger: The Japanese invasion—you know, the Japanese used to print money. They printed Chinese money. They printed Burmese money. See we are unloading the horses on a plane here?

Shannon Berndt: Oh, yeah.

Marty Schlesinger: This is on the Great Wall---this was it. This is 50 years later.

Shannon Berndt: On the Great Wall.

Marty Schlesinger: On the Great Wall. The children. I guess I do not have it here. Anyway, this Lt. Brady, he got called by—oh yeah. Airplane 908. That is Lt. Brady. That is Ray Lucitana [SP] 39:05. That is me over here. That is the copilot and that is the guy we give a ride to. We get called back to our outfit and we fly into Burma on a mission and we come back and the operations says, did that guy have any other pilot besides Lt. Brady? I said, I do not think so. The commanding officer was too old to fly. That is why he wanted somebody to fly his airplane. I said, why do you ask? They were shot down over Rangoon with 18 guys on there. And Lt. Brady got killed. His remains are buried in this plane with just---it never touched the ground. It caught fire---small arms fire caught him in the tank. It caught fire, he never landed. It blew up in the air and he got killed. I believe it was his recklessness that probably caused it. He probably should not have been where he was where they could get him with small arms fire. It was close to the border of Thailand. I do not know if you know Rangoon, which was the southern most part of Burma—now it is Myanmar—and anyway, he must have flown over in a pass and the Japanese were retreating into Thailand and the story I got was that he went to take a look and somebody had a lucky shot, you know, and caught him in the gas tank, and you know, like I said we fly very low, you know, so that happened to him. To make this story longer, about six or seven years ago there was an article in one of our publications, the---you saw that, here, the Sound Off. This was the China-Burma Veterans Association. This is not the---although if you once served in China you could belong to this organization, too. Not necessarily Flying Tigers 014th Air force. So anyway we had this group is still in town. We still---I told you Jack Scofield [SP] 41:36. Shall I read an article? It is a woman looking to find some information about Lawrence Brady, who she knows remains are in Rangoon. Would anybody have any information? Because she has a daughter. She was pregnant when he went overseas. He had just gotten there a short time. Well, I sent her that picture I just showed you. I sent her a copy of the picture. Well, I got a beautiful letter back and she lives in Tyler, Texas, and she wrote how her wonderful little daughter needed to see the picture of her father and the fact that she got some information, and it so happens that my squadron was out in the reunion in San Antonio, so I says, I wrote to her, I said, why do you not come to the reunion so we could meet? And she did. And she met my girlfriend and I, you know, and a wonderful lady, a very nice lady. Of course she had remarried, you know. But her daughter never knew who her father was. But those are war things that happened during a war. Look what is happening now during this crazy, stupid thing.

Shannon Berndt: Yes. Do you recall the day you left the service?

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Marty Schlesinger: Very well. I left the service. We had, after waiting and waiting and waiting to get on a boat for 30 days from---I am in China and they fly us back to Calcutta and we get on a boat and the boat does not go direct. They come and stop in Manila, then over towards the Aleutian Islands and we land up in Tacoma, Washington. Then we get on a train. It was a very nice train. It was a Pullman train. You know, we had upper and lower berths. It was not like the old troop trains. And we landed in Fort Dix, New Jersey. And I take off, I do not care for nuthin', no discharge papers, no nuthin', I am going home. And I get on a train from Fort Dix, New Jersey, to Brooklyn, and there is my wife and my kid and my family, they are all waiting for me. And you know it is terrific. My son at that time was three years old. He crawled under the dining room table, you know, we were at my mother-in-law's house. And then I went back to find, you know, to get my discharge, which---and they hand me my medals. The original medals. My son used to wear them so they are kind of dilapidated. But I will show you a price [SP] 44:35 one. This is the original one.

Shannon Berndt: Oh, just this is...

Marty Schlesinger: My name engraved on it. That is the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Shannon Berndt: Ohhh.

Marty Schlesinger: I got that twice. I got two of those. And the Air Medal I got three times. This is the Air Medal.

Shannon Berndt: Ohhh.

Marty Schlesinger: See, in those days they would engrave your name on the back. I do not think they do it any more.

Shannon Berndt: That is the Air Medal?

Marty Schlesinger: But they replaced them. They sent me new ones.

Shannon Berndt: Oh, they did?

Marty Schlesinger: [Chuckling] These are the replacements. See, these look a little better.

Shannon Berndt: Oh, yeah.

Marty Schlesinger: The same things that were up in the, see?

Shannon Berndt: Oh, yeah.

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Marty Schlesinger: In the upper left. Anyway. They gave me my medals and I went home. My son used to have a little soldier's uniform. I pinned the medals on him. They were never pinned on me officially. Never to a formal ceremony. I do not know--- recently they wanted me to---John Porter's office called to come up to the Henderson Library. I said I cannot make it that day. So they got another guy from Summerlin, you know, and he also got the D.F.C. and eh asked them, I guess, National Guard officer, to pin it on him. So this man said to me, I will get back to you another time. He never did. And I do not care.

Shannon Berndt: So do you belong to the Distinguished Flying Cross group they have?

Marty Schlesinger: No, I do not belong to it. I---they have written to me. I tell you, I belong, I am a life member of the DAV. I belong to the Jewish War Veterans. I belong--and our past commander is CBI. I am in the Aviation Club of the Shrine here, it is at the Zelzah Shrine Temple. Do you know the Shrine? The Aviation Club? There is a couple of times they own their own aircraft and they fly the kids in from north Las Vegas into the hospital in Los Angeles. Did you know that?

Shannon Berndt: _____ (47:06), mm hm.

Marty Schlesinger: Yeah. And what else do I belong to? American Legion guys are after me. The Veterans of Foreign Wars are after me. But the Am Vets I send them a check because they are a wonderful organization. But you cannot belong to all of them. I do not have time.

Shannon Berndt: Do you go to any reunions?

Marty Schlesinger: Oh, all of them.

Shannon Berndt: You go to all of them.

Marty Schlesinger: Oh, yeah. We just---I told you we went to Memorial Day, yeah. My squadron---we used to have a reunion about once a year or once every two years lately with---and the last reunion was scheduled for September 13, 2001. And you know where? Pittsburgh.

Shannon Berndt: Yeah.

Marty Schlesinger: So of course you know what happened after September 11...

Shannon Berndt: That is right.

Marty Schlesinger: So we have never even talked about another reunion. That is the Second Squadron like I told you. We still have the Association. Next year there will be no more Flying Tigers after 2007. You know.

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Shannon Berndt: Yeah. That is too bad. What was your career after the war?

Marty Schlesinger: I went back to my old firm. I was on the road selling bras.

Shannon Berndt: Very good. Do you continue any close relationships with the friends that you made?

Marty Schlesinger: You mean in the service?

Shannon Berndt: Yes.

Marty Schlesinger: Well, I---just my crew chief would be the only one, yeah. Of course I had friends that were in different outfits that I had---that I knew when I was a kid in New York. And we went back to our old friendships except we lost a few of the guys. Then I moved out of New York and moved to Hartford, Connecticut. And I made friends there, also with veterans groups up there. But a couple of guys that I was friendly with was shot down over Germany. They went to Europe. And other friends were lost in the Normandy invasion. You know. It was June 6, 1944. War is a horrible thing. And there is no need for war. With our brains they should talk to people. But we got guys, a bunch in Washington that think war is the thing. I do not know what your feelings are, but mine---I was against the Vietnam war, which I think was all wrong. The Korean War would have never happened if we had not—but that is another story. If we had not recognized Mao Tse-Tung instead of Chiang Kai-shek. I---do you know history? Are you familiar with history?

Shannon Berndt: Not that part.

Marty Schlesinger: How old are you?

Shannon Berndt: I am 51.

Marty Schlesinger: Fifty-one. My little girl is older than you are. [Both laugh softly] In---when I was in _____ (50:39)---in this book—I will show you so you will understand this story. I mean I got to---now you see this? This is the past...

Shannon Berndt: Yeah, coming...

Marty Schlesinger: Now you see the date?

Shannon Berndt: September, 1945.

Marty Schlesinger: Seventh of September. This is five days after the Japanese surrendered. The Japanese surrendered September second in Tokyo Bay. McArthur and those guys, you know, said the war was officially over, right? So I never needed a pass to go into any place. In combat do you know why you needed a pass? Because the

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communists will fight and the nationalists in town. They had gun emplacements at one end of the street and the other I got the _____ (51:41). I am getting out of here. I went back to the base, which was a safe place. And it was Mao Tse-Tung's people fighting Chiang Kai-shek's people. Now what had happened there—are you family with what had happened in 1948 after the war was over between the two Chinese groups? You know who Mao Tse-Tung was?

Shannon Berndt: Yes.

Marty Schlesinger: You know who Ho Chi Minh was?

Shannon Berndt: Yes.

Marty Schlesinger: You know Cho En Lai?

Shannon Berndt: Um...

Marty Schlesinger: This was the triumvirate...

Shannon Berndt: Oh.

Marty Schlesinger: ...in China. Ho Chi Minh was originally from China, you know, he went to Vietnam.

Shannon Berndt: Oh. I did not know that.

Marty Schlesinger: I could tell you a little bit of history. Mao Tse-Tung was a Chinese general. Mao Tse-Tung wanted to fight the Japanese, get rid of them, and then he would take up against Chiang Kai-shek, try to straighten things out. Because Chiang Kai-shek and the land barons that owned land in China, each land baron had his own little army. Did you know that?

Shannon Berndt: No.

Marty Schlesinger: And his sons were like generals. They were 18-year-old generals. And then Mao Tse-Tung was looking just to fight Japanese, and Chiang Kai-shek was looking to fight Mao Tse-Tung. Does not make sense, does it?

Shannon Berndt: No.

Marty Schlesinger: We are fighting a war, Americans are being killed, the British are being killed, and he is fighting---Mao is fighting his own people. And what happened---Madame Chiang Kai-shek was a very influential woman. She spoke perfect English. She was educated in Wellesley. You know where Wellesley is? Massachusetts. That was the equivalent, like the sister school to Harvard. Wellesley College. And she came to the United States and had an interview with Franklin D. Roosevelt. She is the only woman

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that ever addressed the United States Congress at that time, you know, a foreign woman, you know. And she went, you know, to plead a case with Chiang Kai-shek for more money, you know, and all that. And apparently she got what she wanted, you know, and Mao Tse-Tung wrote a letter also to Franklin D. Roosevelt and it was intercepted by Patrick Hurley, who was the ambassador to China. Never got to Roosevelt. He also wanted an interview. Never got it. And the rest is history, that we recognized the regime that he defeated. They fled to Taiwan. You know that. You know what is Taiwan.

Shannon Berndt: Mm hm.

Marty Schlesinger: Taiwan is a so-called democracy now. Mainland China is a communist country. But let me tell you, it is very capitalistic now. There is a lot of rich Chinese. The old guys that used to carry the buckets of—they called them honey buckets—of human fertilizer, their families and grandparents, they were all slaves under these land barons. For years they lived and worked these farms. So when they finally threw them out, the people who worked the land, now they produced---a certain amount of production had to go to the government. The government still owns that land. But anything over that production is theirs to go to the free market, which they have in China now. And they have become very, very rich. So---and the wind up was that if we had recognized the other regime you would not have had a Korean war, you would not have had a Vietnam war. Who were the principle opponents in the Vietnam war? It was China and it was still American soldiers. The Chinese, who loved us, and they do to this day, they love us.

Shannon Berndt: Huh.

Marty Schlesinger: You know, I was back there ten years ago. I was invited again last year. I was there for the 60th anniversary of the Jap surrender and 2005 was the 60th anniversary. Do you want to see the stuff they sent me? It is in a car. A bag and a shirt and a hat with all the V-sign. And boats, and Taiwan we were entertained on Memorial Day. They entertained us. Terrific. So boats on each, both Chinas love the Flying Tigers. And they love Americans. The Chinese love the Americans. I am not talking about the politicians. I am talking about the people. When I was there, well, it is 12 years ago, we were in Kun Ming in a restaurant, the Flying Tigers, and Kun Ming has a very big university there. Well, the students got wind that the Flying Tiger group sat down. Well, they came in droves _____ (57:17) sign my shirt. Sign my hat. Sign my autograph book. It was terrific. And every town we went to, they came out with a banner, welcome Flying Tigers. In five different cities we went to they put us up at five star hotels. You know, you got one star---one five star hotel in this town. You know that?

Shannon Berndt: No, I did not know that.

Marty Schlesinger: The Four Seasons is the only five star hotel in town here.

Shannon Berndt: Huh.

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Marty Schlesinger: We each stayed at five star hotels in five cities in China.

Shannon Berndt: Wow.

Marty Schlesinger: Beautiful.

Shannon Berndt: Did you ever learn any of the language?

Marty Schlesinger: Pardon?

Shannon Berndt: Did you learn any of the language in China?

Marty Schlesinger: No, I did not. I did not have time to learn ____ (58:08). You learned di nao [SP] 58:09.

Shannon Berndt : Well, you are a long way from New York. How did you end up in Las Vegas?

Marty Schlesinger: Well, my firm sent me out to Los Angeles, where I lived for 25 years. And after my wife died I just hated the place I lived in. I had to get out of there, and I was married 45 years when my wife passed away. And I could not stand laying in her bed in that apartment. I just had to get out of there. And I had a lot of friends here and I had customers here, you know, that I used to do business with. And ____ (58:55) roll player, or I was up until December. You see these trophies here? You know I won a national ____ (59:04) championship in 2002 at 85 years old. I think I got that in the car, too, in the trunk. But here---if you turn around right out here, I planed in the world championships ____ (59:22) I can see the, oh, 1991, and I came in second ____ (59:30) out in finals. So I knew I could play handball and I knew a lot of handball players. I had played here in tournaments before I moved out here. And also I knew people in the Shrine. I know people that went to the Masonic Lodge, you know, that had moved from California here. And I would have things to do here to keep me busy, and they do. You know, ____ (1:00:04) we do not have Masonic meetings and we do have Shrine meetings. The Aviation Club, we are dark for July, for instance. But I have a lot of things to do. I think I told you I am a pretty busy guy. Now three days a week I am in a gym. I do not play handball but I do some other water aerobics, you know. At my age I, you know, I got arthritis very bad in my hands. And two days a week I work at the clinic behind, the VA Clinic, behind Sunrise Hospital. You know, there are about a dozen clinics in town, VA, because they are fooling around with that hospital they have been talking about now for ten years now. Originally it was going to reschedule for 2002 and 2006, and 2008. Now it is 2010. And Shelly Berkeley [SP] 1:01:06 and Jonathan Winter and all these politicians, they could not care less. They could not care less.

Shannon Berndt: All right, well thank you so much. I really enjoyed it. And I think we will have Ed come and take some pictures of your---and you can explain to him what some of them are, like [overlapping voices].

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Marty Schlesinger: Here is a letter from Harry Truman over here. You see that is a picture of Hap Arnold. He was the Air Force general. He was the only Air Force general, the only five star general ever was Hap Arnold.

Shannon Berndt: Well, how many...

Marty Schlesinger: That is a picture of Harry---a letter from Harry Truman. See, this is when I became _____ (01:02:12) commander for the time of our---Jack Scofield [SP] was commander again now. Now this, I just got this, I tell you, I just got this

Shannon Berndt: It says "Volunteer of the Year."

Marty Schlesinger: I got this a few months ago they gave this to me.

Shannon Berndt: Nice, very nice.

Marty Schlesinger: There are a lot of things that I have not hung up. I got no room. Here is a member of the Chinese Air Force.

Shannon Berndt: We will have to have Ed take a picture of it.

Marty Schlesinger: I should show you my Chinese wings. They sent me wings, too. I got so much junk here.

Shannon Berndt: That is the scarf you wore in the...

Marty Schlesinger: This is the most dependable airplane ever built.

Shannon Berndt: Do you know what kind of airplane this is?

Marty Schlesinger: This in civilian aircraft is called a DC-3. In the Army it was a C-47. A very dependable airplane.

Shannon Berndt: I need _____ (1:04:04).

Marty Schlesinger: Jim was also the past commander of the Regional Honor of the Shrine in California.

Shannon Berndt: Wow. Do you think we can get a picture---do you think we can take a picture of the picture? A picture of the Dinah-Might airplane? Sure. Can we get a picture again? I guess we put it back in _____ (1:04:39).

Marty Schlesinger: Do you want to see a picture of _____ (1:04:48)? That is 1944.

Shannon Berndt: _____ (1:05:15) And you are on the far right?

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Marty Schlesinger: Yeah, that is me on the right. And I was rarely in uniform [laughter]. They used to tell me, you know, you do not wear a uniform. If you get captured, they are going to kill you. I says, fine, if you do not have a uniform on.

Shannon Berndt: Thank you so much.

Marty Schlesinger: Thank you.

Ed Selzman [SP] 1:05:47: And what is this over here in the corner?

Shannon Berndt: Oh.

Ed Selzman [SP] 1:05:50: Is that yours?

Marty Schlesinger: Yeah, that is a Japanese rifle. That is a .25 caliber. This is a---it was given to me by a maharajah of a city we had just---the Japs had just gotten out of there, the guerillas just drove them out and he gave me this. This gun was laying there and so he gave it to me.

Shannon Berndt: Oooh. Amen.

Ed Selzman [SP] 1:06:21: Uh huh.

Marty Schlesinger: Try to lift this thing. You gotta be a---lift it up. Try to lift it.

Ed Selzman [SP] 1:06:27: Ooh, it is heavy.

Shannon Berndt: Wow.

Marty Schlesinger: And this is only a .25 caliber. And the reason the Japanese---the reason they used a .25 caliber is it will not necessarily kill a man. But they figured if you just wound them, you are going to take at least two guys to carry them. You know? You knock three guys out of the fighting, and that was their theory with using the .25 caliber rifle for their infantry.

Ed Selzman [SP] 1:07:01: Hm.

Marty Schlesinger: And I brought home Ghurka knives and other junk. Okay.

Shannon Berndt: So how many children do you have?

Marty Schlesinger: I have three. I have a son in New York. I have a daughter in California. I have a daughter in Hawaii. And I have three granddaughters. Two of them are married in New York and my daughter in California has a little girl ten years old, a terrific kid. I have wonderful kids. And my son is a---he is a veteran of Vietnam.

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During the Vietnam era he lucked out that they did not send him overseas. They sent him to officer candidate school. He wound up a first lieutenant and his commanding officer liked the way he ran things. He kept him---the commanding officer said, let us go play golf all day. [Laughter]