

**Oral History Interview of
Fiske Hanley**

**Interviewed by: Andy Wilkinson
April 24, 2015
Lubbock, Texas**

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Transcript Overview:

This interview features Fiske Hanley. Hanley recounts his experience as a POW in Japan and his interactions with the *Kempeitai*. Hanley also discusses his career in mechanical engineering and his writing career.

Length of Interview: 01:29:38

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Keywords

Aviation, mechanical engineering, Texas Tech University, U.S. Air Force, World War II

[The following dialogue was recorded before the official interview began. Interview begins at 00:7:40]

Fiske Hanley (FH):

Well you qualify. We're going to tell you. Now this is secret, you know. We would meet once a month at 2:00 a.m. down at Lubbock Hotel. And it was all secret. Texas Tech faculty—nobody knows anything about this—but we make things happen. I said, "Well that's interesting." So I joined. They signed me up. They already had run an investigation, and so, we did.

AW:

How big a group was it?

FH:

It was about twenty.

AW:

Really?

FH:

Yeah. Big in every area, football players, everything. I was head of—Dean Allen was the dean of men then, the interclub council, we didn't have fraternities, and so that's how I got in there because I had this—I had political office, and real good guys, all straightforward, no foolishness, and we did it.

AW:

What was the biggest accomplishment of the Alamo Club while you were in it?

FH:

Well, I'm sorry you asked that because I can't remember. There were a bunch of them. (laughs)

AW:

Oh, I thought you were going to say you can't—you couldn't tell me.

FH:

Over at the stadium, we did things, and beautification of the campus.

AW:

Oh, cool.

FH:

—just things. Well, if the dining—the food in dormitories was not up to snuff, well, we saw to that that that got improved.

AW:

What about relations in the community? When you were here, you were just—Tech was just off a real rough spot with—some of the city council wanted to throw out some of the professors, and that happened before you got here I'm sure.

FH:

Yeah, I didn't know anything about that.

AW:

So, that was not an issue for you then.

FH:

No. We didn't go after professors.

AW:

No, I mean the smoothing over, having to deal with the community at large outside the campus. I just wondered.

FH:

Yeah. Well, I guess some of the members of Alamo were local people. And of course, they knew their way around politically, and so wherever that helped us out. We had help from the city.

AW:

Do you keep in touch with any of the former Alamo Club members?

FH:

No. No, that's all over. The fact is I think they're all dead. I'd have to get out the annual and look at them. That's 1943.

Jennifer Spurrier (JS):

What year? Okay, 1943?

FH:

Yeah.

JS:

Is he going up front to get an annual?

AW:

No. Monte was going to go get another book that Fiske had—

JS:

You want me to go grab one?

FH:

Yeah, *20th Air Force Album*.

JS:

1943.

AW:

'43

FH:

It's so thick. Beautiful book and I've got—

AW:

Yeah. Monte seemed to recognize the book when you described it.

FH:

Yeah. Yeah. Well, it's a collector's item. Of course that big one there is used at the Air Force Academy.

AW:

Yeah, I'd seen this book. I had not seen this one.

FH:

This is the one—I came out here to a reunion, after I got liberated, and came over here to the Southwest Collection, and I found out where these books were, and I got the POW book, took it down to the desk, and I said, "I'm an alumni here. I want to check this out," and the young lady said, "Great. Great." I said, "Wrong. (laughter) Let's go see the head librarian." So here we go. I said, "This book—all three of my books—are to be locked up, never leave the campus. They can be read and so on, but lock and key." And she said, "That's the rule." I said, "Well, this young lady was going to check it out." No, so we got that straightened out.

AW:

Yeah, no. We don't let our things go out. In fact, if you've seen in there, we don't even let people bring pencils and paper, and anything leaves the room, we give them out the stuff ourselves.

FH:

Sure, well, our National Archives, that book there, I spent three and a half years working on it, and boy, that's something else. If you're ever allowed to research up there, you take in and you bring out, that's all, notes, if you write them down.

Monte Monroe (MM):

Freedonia's coming in here. She's is our tsarina of cataloging, and I couldn't initially find it so tell her the title of that because the only other one that I found was a second copy of the *504 Bomb Group*.

FH:

Oh, okay. I didn't know you had two.

MM:

I have two of those. Freedonia, this is Mr. Hanley. Fiske Hanley, Freedonia Paschal.

Freedonia Pascal (FP):

Good morning. How are you?

MM:

And she keeps me and Tai and Randy in—

FH:

Good to be here. Your name is Paschal?

FP:

Paschal.

FH:

How about that? Well, I went to Paschal High School before the war.

JS:

I grabbed three years just in case. There's '42, '43, '44.

MM:

These are for your daughters, two of those there. Now I'm getting ready—I have to run down to the other end of town real quick.

FH:

We'll stay in touch.

MM:

Absolutely, Mr. Hanley. You know how to get a hold of me, and you're in good hands here.

AW:

—because I'll be driving him back, so I'll just—I may—

JS:

Stick your head in there? Text me.

FP:

Mr. Hanley?

FH:

I wonder where that book—well somebody got off with it, I guess.

AW:

Oh, I don't think so.

FP:

What was the name of it? Do you know what the name of it—?

MM:

No, no, Freedonia's going to find it.

FH:

It's a beautiful book. It's all blue. This size.

AW:

It's called the *20th Air Force*—

FH:

—20th Air Force Album. All pictures. Beautiful book. And I got it republished, twelve hundred copies, and a thousand of them were sold to 20th Air Force people, and I saved out two hundred for me, and these were scattered all over the world.

FP:

Well, I'm going to go look again because Monte gave me a different title.

MM:

Oh, I did? It's my fault. It's my fault, as usual.

JS:

We're used to it.

FP:

I'll go see if I can find it.

MM:

I told you. She keeps us in order.

FH:

Maybe it disappeared before we had our showdown over that book.

MM:

That's right. That's right. Okay. Travel safely. Remember, that fifty mil. might take care of those development people, but you know, they'll always be on you no matter what. And then Andy, remember, he needs to be back over at the Overton at 12:15.

AW:

12:15. Yeah, we'll leave here at 12:00.

MM:

And the campus is getting crowded out there because of Arbor Day.

AW:

Yeah, we'll leave at 12:00. I've got the keys.

FH:

That's what the schedule—

MM:

Thanks for coming to be with us, Mr. Hanley.

JS:

Nice to meet you.

FH:

Thank you. Bye-bye.

AW:

Yeah, have a seat.

FH:

Yeah. See, this is a schedule that Caitlin put together. Well, it's detailed. So they kept me busy, and that's good.

AW:

Yeah, okay. Well, I will—

FH:

I'd forgotten how to—

AW:

While you're looking at that I'm going to—

FH:

Yeah, here it is.

AW:

Right, and you had a nice—

FH:

'92. See that?

AW:

Mhmm.

FH:

See this book came out in '92, and this came out in '97.

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AW:

Yeah, and I can't if tell that's a "7" or a "9"—but I noticed—

FH:

And so that *20th Air Force Album* was more like after that.

AW:

So sometime in 2000-something?

FH:

Yeah, yeah.

AW:

Okay. Have a seat.

FH:

You bet.

AW:

And let me say for the record, this is April 24, 2015. Andy Wilkinson with Fiske Hanley II, and we're going to be visiting. That's how we know a hundred years from now which Fiske Hanley we're talking about, just in case. There may be III's, IV's, and V's about two hundred years from now.

FH:

Well, yeah.

AW:

Where were you born?

FH:

When or what?

AW:

Where and when?

FH:

Brownwood, Texas. January 14, 1920. Brownwood, Texas.

AW:

Did you live there long? The reason that I'm asking is that my uncle for whom I've named and died in the Second World War—

FH:

Do you have a card or something? Helps me with my memory.

AW:

I do, and my uncle and my father and grandfather—the whole family lived in Brownwood, and he taught math. But if you were graduated from somewhere else, you might not know them. There's my—and I've written my cell number down there for you, too.

FH:

Okay, great.

AW:

So how long did you live in Brownwood before you moved off—?

FH:

Not long.

AW:

Not long? Okay.

FH:

I was a baby and my father was in the oil business, Gulf Oil, and his job took him to Wichita Falls. Probably I was not even one.

AW:

Oh, so you were gone pretty quickly? Okay.

FH:

Yeah, so I grew up in Wichita Falls until I was ten, 1930. And then we moved away to Fort Worth and lived there ever since.

AW:

Okay, then at Fort Worth. What brought you to Texas Tech?

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FH:

Excuse me?

AW:

What brought you to Texas Tech?

FH:

Well, aviation. I first went two years to a junior college, a part of A&M, NTAC, North Texas Agricultural College, two year college, A&M. And that junior college—they had an aviation course there, which I took, and so—and ROTC, too, which the war was on, see. And so when I finished there, Texas Tech had an aeronautical engineering program just being set up, brand new. And I found out about it, and my aunt and uncle lived in Levelland, so all these things added up to is, this is it. So I came out here and signed up for that, but it took me three years to get through out here because A&M, Texas Tech systems didn't jive.

AW:

Right, in terms of your credits that you already had with you.

FH:

That's right, and that's where Godeke comes in, which is quite a story.

AW:

So tell me about that story, yeah.

FH:

Well, here's the story. In 1942 fall, I was a senior, and I got a letter in the mail saying, "Greetings, You have been selected to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces." In my dormitory room here, that letter came, and I thought, "Uh-oh," because I wanted to graduate. And so I went down to the air force recruiting because what I was taking—mechanical engineering, aero—made me qualified to do good things for the air force.

AW:

And also, for you to finish out before going, yeah.

FH:

Yeah, that's right. That's right. And the agreement was they would let me finish and then call me. And they had three different kinds of ground cadets. Most people don't know this. There's meteorological, weather, well that is weather, and communications, and engineering, so I was engineering. And so I came back, and I'm still worried about the possibility of me being called, so I had talked to Dean Adams who was dean of the engineering department about what maybe I

should do, and so he said, "Well, what you need to write to faculty council and ask to graduate in absentia in case you get called." Now this is quite a story. So I said, "Okay." So, I'm in my dormitory room, typewriter, typed up this nice letter to the faculty council. And in a short time, I got a call back to Dean Adams' office, and he's very solemn. He said, "Mr. Hanley, you've been refused to that capability to graduate in absentia." And I said, "Oh. Why?" He looked at me real mean-looking, and he said, "You don't know how to spell." I said, "What you do mean?" He said, "You don't know how to spell absentia." (laughter) And he started laughing. And he grinned and he said, "You passed. We—it's okay, but you don't know how to spell absentia." He said, "I'm not even sure I know how." So that was set up, but I—well, I'd gone the summer before all this happened in '42 to the University of Texas because my aunt, another aunt, lived down there in Austin, and they had a real good ME school, mechanical engineering, and Degler, who'd wrote the thermal dynamics book, I took heavy thermal—engineering courses—which I needed up here to graduate in three years instead of two, which I should have if these things had worked okay. So anyway, I took these courses and figured these would transfer. Hell, the head of the department had wrote the book down there, the head of the department. He knew Godeke; Godeke knew him, and so made straight A's in all of that, and then I got out here, and then I found out that Tech would not pass these, Professor Godeke—because Godeke didn't like Degler because Degler was a playboy, and he wasn't, and he didn't like him, and so I suffered. So, I asked him, Godeke, what could I do about it. "Well, write the faculty council and ask them if I would give you a test, and if you passed, then we would transfer." So I did, and they said, "Okay." So, he gave me ten questions, and he said, "You can use anything, anywhere." I said, "I don't need anything. I know thermal dynamics." And so I worked on the ten questions, turned them in—

(Tai enters the room)

AW:

Thanks, Tai.

FH:

Lookie there, you're a good finder. Thank you. So, I—let's see, where was I? Okay.

AW:

About the test.

FH:

So, yeah, the test. I asked Godeke after a week or so afterward, "How'd I do?" He didn't tell me. He said, "You passed." I said, "Good. Are you going to transfer or what's—" Several courses, not just civil engineering, a bunch of stuff that—they hadn't transferred any of it.

AW:
Gosh.

FH:
And so, I'd wondered how I did on that test. He didn't tell me. But in the spring semester, he called me into his office, this Godeke, hardheaded German, and said, "Fiske, how about you being my student grader in thermal dynamics?" (laughter) I said, "Really?" "Yeah, you know more than I do." So that worked. Interesting. So that was Godeke. He and I made out real good. Good man.

AW:
What was Tech's engineering program like at that time?

FH:
Well, it was very good.

AW:
It was well respected, was it?

FH:
There were not a whole lot of engineering, mechanical engineering, most of them are civil and chemical and so on, electrical. But mechanical, and that's where—let's see, I was here three years, so I'm taking mechanical first two years, and then in the last year, now they got this which they had been planning, and they hired a man on the outside, Professor Powers, who was aviation industrial on the west coast. They put him in charge of this aviation engineering thing—
aero engineering—and he set up this thing right there for five students. Five. Four little students, after the war was over, went to work for Convair like me, four of the five.

AW:
Four of the five. That's pretty good.

FH:
You bet, and so really a first-class, because this guy knew what he was doing, and the war was on, and we knew what we were doing when he got through teaching us for one year, two semesters. And so he remained here because I came back to reunions, and I always looked him and Godeke and Adams up when I came up here and checked the books here. So we knew what we were doing. And I—of course, I was a POW, and so when I got liberated and came back, I came out here and—let's see, what happened then? Well, this Bill Grounds in prison.

AW:

How do you spell his name?

FH:

G-r-o-u-n-d-s.

AW:

Just like coffee grounds.

FH:

Yeah, just like coffee grounds. And he had gone to NTAC with me. And I got shot down, and he got shot down a couple missions after I did, or couple of months, hell it was six months.

AW:

Yeah, I was looking at your—the dates.

FH:

And I guess about four months into this, I had a beard—see we got no sanitation, no medical attention. And so he got shot down, and they kept bringing in—they were not taking many prisoners. There weren't many—we were in a dungeon, and—

AW:

They weren't taking them because they were killing them?

FH:

Killed them, civilians, civilians mostly. I don't blame them. Hell, we killed more people on the Tokyo Raid, March ninth, than either atomic bomb. So anyway, they brought in these new prisoners, and I'm down there in this cell with eight people in it—five by nine feet in size—eight: three Japanese and five Americans. So we had gotten them all in there, and this fellow—they brought in about three new prisoners that they'd just captured—his lights were shot out from the bombing raid, Tokyo, and he's sitting across from me in the very dim light, and I'm sitting there, God, I must've smelled bad, still wounded, and he kept looking at me, but he had been shaved, cleaned, and so on. They were in a neighborhood *Kempeitai* prison. And some army colonel, they were marching them over to where we were, and this gourmet Jap army colonel saw these *Kempeis* with these few prisoners, probably about ten of them something like that, and called the *Kempei* guard over here and said, "What do you got there. It's a raunchy looking bunch." He said, "Well, these are B-29 prisoners. We're taking them over to *Kempeitai* Headquarters. They said, "Not yet, you're not. You by God take those people to the nearest army post and get them cleaned up, get their uniforms, shaved, cleaned up. Make them look good."

AW:

That's interesting.

FH:

Yeah.

AW:

A certain tension between the army and the *Kempeitai*.

FH:

Well, the *Kempeitai*, everybody's scared of them. I can tell you some interesting stories about them. So, here they come in, uniforms all washed, cleaned, shaved, so on, and he's sitting over there, this guy, and I didn't recognize him. But he kept looking at me kind of funny, and he finally said that we had to be careful talking to each other because they beat the hell—kill a lot of people for talking to each other. He said, "I think I know you." "Really?" He said, "Did you go to NTAC?" I said, "Yeah." He says, "You know who I am?" I said, "No." He said, "I'm Bill Grounds." "Bill Grounds? Really?" Hell, we're in the same squadron and all that. So we acquainted. We got liberated together, and after the war, he was married; I wasn't. And his wife knew some American Airlines stewardesses. And the Ford Motor Company—I went down with my POW, just weighed seventy pounds when I got liberated—and the Ford people really looked after me. I got the first convertible off the line. So, I'm in high cotton, and she got me these stewardess dates, and I had no problem. Boy, I had the choice, but this is important. I couldn't sleep. Bad nightmares, so on. So I took my college typewriter, Texas Tech, and I typed a few pages.

AW:

Does that become this book?

FH:

That became that book. And I'll tell you something very interesting. This is very interesting.

AW:

And for the tape, I'm pointing to *Accused American War Criminal*.

FH:

I'm going to tell you about that. Typed this up on hotel stationary, whatever I could get my hands on, single-spaced, ended up fifty pages. And there was—every few days new stewardesses come up, go down there, and I'd take these pages, two or three, and they would read them and correct them, really interested. Oh, boy, they were really reading all of this stuff. But as I typed it, it left me. Got rid of it all.

AW:

So that was in some ways a—?

FH:

After, say, a couple months.

AW:

So it was like a healing—yeah.

FH:

Absolutely, and the doctors don't understand that, but that happened.

AW:

Well, you know, we've actually talked about—we've got some programs going on now where current veterans with PTSD are writing songs for the same purpose. So this is kind of the same purpose.

FH:

Yeah, there you go. Well, see, then doctors know all about this, but the doctors today, well they think I'm in my seventies or early eighties. They do not understand why I'm ninety-five and still twenty-twenty vision.

AW:

No, you look great.

FH:

That's right. So anyway, I finished up the story, and here it is, and I guess I made copies of it because of what I'm going to tell you now just happened a couple of weeks ago. Had a call from Tennessee, some lady, and she said, "Mr. Hanley, I got something here I got to tell you about. I went to a garage sale, and I bought a bunch of junk, and in the junk was this folder, real old, and it has a story in there that you apparently wrote."

AW:

Wow.

FH:

I said, "Really?" "Yeah." "I said, 'I'll be doggone, at a garage sale?'" "Yeah." She said, "I'm going to send it to you because it's nothing to me, but it's—just looks like junk." And so in the mail, and my wife was there when this package came, had to open it up, and it was back of an

old, frayed, manila envelope or file deal, and on the back of the back of it, I'm looking at this carbon copy, old. See, this is 1945.

AW:

Forty-five, yeah.

FH:

Forty-five when I typed this, and I thought, This looks familiar. I kept coming up, up at the front: "My Japanese Prison Experience: Fiske Hanley." I was like, "Oh, my God."

AW:

Wow.

FH:

Wherever this was, I had taken the carbon copy and given it to my sister who typed it up in a deal—retyped it and did some more organization of what that lady had. And I guess she just kept it and got rid of a bunch of stuff because he died a long time ago. And here this junk came back, and that I was telling our friend here—

AW:

Monte?

FH:

—Monte, that, see, all my military stuff goes in Nimitz Museum, Word War II. However, my industrial and so on doesn't belong down there, at the Nimitz. And so I've been wondering what I should do with this. Of course, Texas Tech would be the first choice, and now is the first choice, so this will be one of the things you get.

AW:

We'd love to have it.

FH:

Boy, you know this is something else.

AW:

Yeah, it is something else. We would make a logical choice, mainly, also because, the Nimitz is a museum and we're an archive, and our job is storing paper and things like that. And I doubt that they're as equipped for that as we are. But I have a very fond place in my heart for the Nimitz because my uncle for whom I've named has his name on the wall and—

FH:

Oh yeah. Hagee, this marine, is in charge of it too down there, friend of mine.

AW:

Yeah. You didn't happen I guess to keep any of those hotel stationary pieces you typed on to start with, did you?

FH:

Well, I think these copies have some of those in there.

AW:

Oh, they do?

FH:

Yeah.

AW:

That's just wonderful. Yeah.

FH:

You bet. See, that's all I had. I'm home with my mother and father, and I haven't got anything. They'd given away just about everything.

AW:

Did your mother and father assume that you were—

FH:

Dead.

AW:

Dead. They got no notice—

FH:

Oh, of course. They've got—well and the book there, you know, the copies, the letter from the chaplains said, "there's no hope, give him up." So, I'm gone, so they gave away quite a bit of my stuff. But there's several things that belong here.

AW:

Yeah. Well, just let us know. Don't mail it, though. We'll come get it.

FH:

My daughter's got a storage room just full of books that I collected when I was doing the research on this book here. And so, well, that will be military, that'll go to the Nimitz, all that stuff.

AW:

Well, whatever we can do to help you with any of that, we'll do it. Yeah.

FH:

Oh, sure. Yeah. He said that that van will come get all this stuff.

AW:

You bet, and—

FH:

Well, I want the Nimitz's van to come up and get—

AW:

Well, if they don't do that, you let us know. We might could help you.

FH:

Well, of course. Well, if they don't want to, it's yours.

AW:

Well, even if they want it, but won't come get it, we might be able to help you out.

FH:

See, this has war crime. I don't know whether you've read this.

AW:

I got a chance to scan it after we had—I read the Zamperini book, and I learned about this book, and so I had the chance to look through—

FH:

Well, here's the bibliography, has all these books are stored. Look at all that.

AW:

That's a great bibliography.

FH:

And these are the ones that are in the library that I used to do all of this. Yeah. See, you read *Unbroken*, and this is Camp Omori where I was, and that's where Louis Zamperini was. I didn't know him because I was in a prison within a prison here, so we couldn't talk to those people, but I knew about him.

AW:

Yeah. Was he not a special prisoner also? That was one of things that—

FH:

He was not a special prisoner.

AW:

He wasn't. Okay.

FH:

There was a fellow from Austin by the name Bob Martindale who was in my bomb group. Now, he was a B-29 guy, so he's a special prisoner. Now, "The Bird" had two whipping boys, not just Louis, but he had Martindale. Now, both of these people wrote books, Louis and Martindale, and I have both those books.

AW:

I haven't read the Martindale book.

FH:

Yeah. Well, that's quite a book, and so—

AW:

But now you were a special prisoner, right?

FH:

Absolutely. All of B-29 people were special prisoners. Pappy Boyington was a special prisoner, at my barracks, he was a barracks commander.

AW:

Would you—I mean I know that it's talked about in these areas—

FH:

I don't know how long we got, yeah.

AW:

We've got some time.

FH:

Long time, yeah.

AW:

Would you talk a little bit about that distinction because one of the things that I thought was most interesting about—not most interesting—but very interesting about the stories for people like yourself was this different classification of a prisoner. You know, how did they—how did they do that in a war, you know?

FH:

Well, there were just two classifications. One was POW, then they had the war criminals to be tried and executed for killing women and children. Special prisoners, special rules.

AW:

So they could not—

FH:

No medical attention, one-half regular rations, Bataan Death March—they were on starvation. We were on accelerated starvation ration. See, I lost from 160 down to 70 pounds, and no sanitation. Nothing. We were to be tried and executed, and they were killing them, letting us die, purposely infected my wounds. Bad. So, my body survived, and that's what the doctors don't understand. Why. (laughs) Man upstairs.

AW:

Yeah, it's pretty amazing when you look at that, just the rations alone, even if you didn't have any infections. How in the world do you—?

FH:

Yeah, so, that's special prisoner, and they tried executing, murdering, and all kinds of poisoning, and I survived. Apparently, one of the main reasons is that—see I was a prisoner of the *Kempeitai*, top intelligence people who spoke better English than I did. They were either Americans or educated in the United States. Now lo unto themselves, and the Japanese, smart people, figured that engineering types knew more about war, mechanisms, all of that, so my—only two of us got out of my airplane, the co-pilot and I. The co-pilot was not even in *Kempeitai* headquarters, special prisoner in a suburban prison, so the intelligence people—class engineers like me, knowledgeable—and they kept me there to brain pick me. And they—we were briefed that we could tell them anything they wanted to know—fact is, our intelligence people told us

how many airplanes, ships, all of that, so we could brag. Well, I didn't really feel like I could brag, but we were not restricted. But, they're not interested in technical stuff too much. Their main drive—and this make sense—their main drive is what do the American people feel about this war and how can we end it, you know, so this is happy both ways.

AW:

That's what they wanted to know.

FH:

I said, "You can read the paper." I said, "I don't know anything about that." They said, "Well, you read the papers." I said, "I just read funny papers." (laughs) I wasn't going to tell them that the American public was getting tired of war. "They were?" (laughs)

AW:

That's very interesting. I would have thought they kept you there because of your background and your—

FH:

Well, partly, but they—of course, after a couple of months, hell, I'm gone, you know.

AW:

Not much value in that.

FH:

So they don't—but these new prisoners come in, they kill them, beat them, poison them, torture them, and so I was just kept there and—

AW:

Oh, Monte Monroe had mentioned that you had told him or someone about asking some Japanese, fairly recently about the *Kempeitai*, and that they were still—

FH:

Oh, yeah. Let me tell you about that.

AW:

Yeah, I would like to hear that story.

FH:

This is very interesting. And our government needs to know more about this, too. I've been taken back to Iwo Jima twice now with marines. A couple years ago, I went over there, and there were

I guess about, oh eight or ten POW marines, all of them, and me, air force. And they said, "What are you doing here?" I said, "Well, I bombed Iwo." "So?" I said, "Yeah, and I'm not proud of that." Now this first trip back, a couple years ago, 2012, and I said, "Our bombing of Iwo before the marines invaded it was the airfield and we missed it." Trade wind winds. What do you call them? High winds. High altitude.

AW:

Yeah, like the jet stream sort of thing.

FH:

Yeah, jet stream. And that made us miss. Twenty percent of the bombs hit on the edge of the island about two miles from the airfield. We didn't like that. Eighty percent are out in the water killing fish. No good. Not good at all. And I told these marines that when I was over there, and they said, "What did you say?" And I said, "Twenty percent of our bombs hit, five-hundred pound bombs, fifty B-29s, now that's a bunch of bombs, and even just twenty percent of them." And they said, "Oh, my." What they did when they came in and landed, the Japanese had all those invasion beaches under fire zeroed in, and here comes these marines that I'm on this trip with, knowing when they got there, here are all these bomb holes. What do you call a—?

AW:

Like a crater?

FH:

Yeah. There's a word for it, dog pits or something. And that saved them, so I'm a hero.

AW:

So by missing the airfield, you actually saved lives. That's interesting.

FH:

So, these five or six adopted me, then. So here a couple weeks ago, we went back. Then another trip, there were thirty marines and two air force guys. So, he was a P-51 pilot what he was, out in Iwo, you know, after they took it. And so we're both real in like Flynn with all these marines. And so we're adopted, but what I'm going to tell you now is mighty interesting, and a lot of people don't know about this because I hadn't documented this anywhere. Iwo Jima, in World War II, for a good reason, is made part of the city of Tokyo, seven hundred and fifty miles away, an outpost, part of the city, and it still is.

AW:

I didn't know that.

FH:

No. So, back in 2012, it was strange, you know, there are all these high level people in the Japanese government, and their World War II people are dead, are gone. So they're high level people, and this time, I'm looking over there, and there's people in black business suits, you know, top hats almost, dressed to the hilt; they had big corsages on, and I'm looking and I had the program, and the prime minister was a part of it, secretary of defense, secretary of the state, all these top people, about twenty of them. And so, I decided, me, I'm going over there and talk to them. So I picked out the first guy there who happened to be the prime minister. Introduced myself to him, I said, "You speak English?" "Yes I do." I said, "Good. I want to ask you a question." I said, "What do you know about the *Kempeitai*? Are these—?" "Oh, *Kempeitai*!" Now this is the prime minister scared to death. Thought, Oh my.

AW:

Yes, so are they still—I guess they're still in action over there.

FH:

So, yeah, so this is the first, then I—these guys—one on one. I did that on purpose. Of course, they were not talking to each other. They had seats there. Each of them had their own thing. Actually, I talked to—it was the secretary of defense, grey-headed, white-haired fellow. So, I did the same thing, "What do you know about the *Kempeitai*?" "The *Kempeitai*!" They're scared to death of them. And then the other one was the secretary of state, and I went, "Oh my, this is enough."

AW:

Boy, that's interesting.

FH:

Yeah. Not only is that, but for the past several years, the Japanese government through our state department have been taking about four POWs over at their expense with a caregiver in the fall, in the August time frame, and paying all of that, taking them to Tokyo first, and then a few days out wherever they were prisoners. Of course, I'm picked out for this year to go and at the state department—

AW:

When will that be? This coming fall?

FH:

Yes.

AW:
Yeah.

FH:
Yeah, I'm on the list.

AW:
Gosh, when you get back, I wish you would give me a call. I'd like to do another interview with you about what that trip was like.

FH:
Oh, well yeah, okay.

AW:
I think that—

FH:
Oh, yeah.

AW:
That would be something to add.

FH:
See, they'd broken our code too, and I talked to them yesterday about that, Okinawa, say, I got shot down on March twenty-ninth—no March twenty-seventh, and Easter is when the invasion of Okinawa was going to take place—and they had broken our code, and our country, it never has admitted that, ever, but they had. These people told me that and showed me. They showed me—it would go nowhere because they were going to kill me; it's an invasion plan, Operation Olympic and operation whatever it is Tokyo plan. I forgot what that one was. But they knew where, when, how, how many, the whole plan. How did they get that? Espionage. They had it. So there's lots of things that our government doesn't want to own up to.

AW:
Yeah, right. We don't like to admit that we were spied on like that.

FH:
No, no.

AW:

And you mentioned that some of these *Kempeitai* were Americans, too, like they were Japanese-Americans.

FH:

Oh, hell yeah. This guy right here, Shorty. (Fiske looks through book to find a picture) Where is he? Well, let's see, in here somewhere. There's two sets of pictures in here, so—yeah, he's going to be around here. This guy was in charge of—he issued orders to kill all of his prisoners, but “Shorty,” this guy, tried to kill me over and over and over, and he's worse than “The Bird” in *Unbroken*. Hawaiian.

AW:

Hawaiian.

FH:

Born in Hawaii. During the war, he came back over there. He was sentenced to forty years. MacArthur turned him loose. He went back to Hawaii, became a millionaire, had two kids. And a friend of mine, a four, pretty high little guy, asked me if he could research and find him for me. I said, “If you do, I'll kill him.” He said, “I'll help you.” He found him, but he's dead, so, “Shorty.” That's—he was not intelligent. He was a soldier, and civilians—I say as a soldier—civilian part of the *Kempeitai*, but he was in charge of all prisoners: who lived, who died, who got poisoned, who got murdered, and all of that stuff.

AW:

That's something.

FH:

Yup.

AW:

Let's back up just a little bit. Let me—a question I wanted to ask—I forgot when we were talking about Texas Tech—you did some air training out at Breedlove Field, is that right?

FH:

Where?

AW:

Breedlove Field, airfield.

FH:

Oh, the airfield out here.

AW:

At Reese—what's now Reese, but not—

FH:

I was aviation engineer, and the US government, World War II, had the CPT program, Civilian Pilot Training, and about ten of us in my class were signed up to get our license, and we flew out of that field up there. That was Lubbock Municipal Airport, and that's where I got my flying experience, taildragger, tailer draft, and good thing I did because I knew how to fly in case—see I was a flight engineer keeping the motors running, but if those two guys flying the thing had problems, I could get up there and at least get us down, so that's good. So I trained up there and—you bet.

AW:

And we also forgot—you were telling that great story about the woman finding that file folder and we—

FH:

Finding what now?

AW:

The file folder with your—

FH:

Oh my.

AW:

But we got off track on the story about the stewardesses and Bill Grounds. Now, is one of the stewardesses you married to now?

FH:

Absolutely.

AW:

Oh, that's great.

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FH:

Pretty. There were two hundred and fifty American airline stewardesses in Fort Worth, and I picked the prettiest one, married her. That's my story.

AW:

That's a good story. (laughs) You've spent your life in aviation.

FH:

Absolutely. From when I was five years old in Wichita Falls, my dad took me out to a grass landing strip, Ford Trimotor out there, penny a pound for anybody that flies. He paid fifty cents for me to fly in a Ford Trimotor.

AW:

Wow.

FH:

Boy, that was something, a penny a pound.

AW:

The first model airplane I ever had was of a Ford Trimotor; I always thought they were most elegant in some ways, you know?

FH:

Wonderful airplane, oh, yeah, absolutely. That was C-47, you know, the DC-3.

AW:

That's the first airplane flight I took as a little kid was in a DC-3.

FH:

Well, we got one at Fort Worth out at Meacham field.

AW:

Do you?

FH:

And FIFI the B-29 is based there right now.

AW:

Yeah, that's amazing.

FH:
Yeah.

AW:
So, at five years old, you were already interested?

FH:
Oh my, yeah, building model airplanes, paper, glued them together, flying them in the wind and all that stuff.

AW:
Did you ever get to fly again before you got to college?

FH:
What?

AW:
Did you get to fly any before you got to college or was that one trip up—?

FH:
Well, of course I had a pilot's license. But see, I graduated one night here, and went down to army recruiting and asked when I was going to get called, and they said, "Here are your orders. Here's your train ticket." I said, "I got my parents' car." They said, "They'll find it." (laughter) I'm gone, that close.

AW:
Wow. That's something. So when you were liberated in August of '45, is that right?

FH:
August twenty-ninth.

AW:
How long was it before you were able to get back into working in aviation?

FH:
Well, see, I was badly wounded still.

AW:
Yeah, I knew. I knew that, yeah. So you had to have a recovery time.

FH:

I made every army, navy, or whatever hospital on the way back: Okinawa, Guam, Hawaii, San Francisco, Brooke Hospital, San Antonio, so I didn't get back home till October. See, liberated on August twenty ninth, and I had about two weeks in Okinawa. They wouldn't let me out of the hospital. I had fever, and I busted out of there, I insulted this colonel, and told him he didn't know what the hell he was doing. This nurse, she's—two weeks and I'm not out of there yet. My folks don't even know I'm alive, and I told this nurse, I said, "I'm going to be out of here tomorrow. Watch me." She said, "How are you going to that?" I said, "Just watch me." Said, "Good luck." (laughter) So every morning, the colonel and his staff, about five on his staff, and he'd talk about each patient, and he came to me and he said, "We don't know what's wrong with him, but he's got this fever and it's bad, and we're not going to turn him out of here because he might—" you know. And so, he went through that spiel again, and when he got through, I looked him in the eye, and I said, "Colonel, you don't know what the hell you're doing." He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Well, I came through the dispensary from this tent camp where us POWs were, you know, liberated, and they put cold packs on me"—I had hemorrhoids, too—"they put cold packs, and you're putting hot packs on them, and you don't know what in the hell you're doing, and I want to get out of here." (laughter) Thirty minutes later, I'm in a meat wagon going back to the camp. Nurse came over and said, "Boy." (laughter) So I insulted the holy hell out of him. I bet his staff talked about that for a while.

AW:

I'll bet they did. I wonder if he changed his hot pack, cold pack routine. (laughter)

FH:

Probably. (laughter)

AW:

So, but even by October, you couldn't have been fully healthy.

FH:

Oh, no, no, no. I was [unintelligible] (51:26) at home with my mother once I got on, gaining two pounds a day. Boy, she was really feeding me. And of course, we were fed by these liberation people. Well, first thing when they liberated the prison camp, there were about seven hundred allied prisoners there, and there were about I guess twenty or thirty people like me who were still badly wounded, and they segregated us, put us on landing craft, and took us out to the hospital ship *Benevolence*, big white ship with red cross on it. And we got out—I was in the first ship boat that got out there, and I'm looking up climbing this ladder, and all these good looking nurses, you know, their white uniform, medics. (laughs) Phew. But there were two schools of thought with these doctors because we were the first prison camp liberated.

AW:

They didn't have any experience with—?

FH:

No, none. None at all.

AW:

Yeah.

FH:

They knew about the Bataan people, but we were different. So one camp said, "Feed them anything. We'll lose some of them, but they're going to die happy." The other one said, "No, no. We're not going to do that. We're going to gradually bring them back to good health slowly and so on." Well, fortunately for us, the people "feed them anything let them enjoy life," so they won. So, after they got us examined, and so on, they fed us. The navy really eats well, and they had fed us, and we'd go over the rail just to get loaded up, throw it all away, so that was the end of that.

AW:

Did you lose any of—any of you—not make it?

FH:

Did any die?

AW:

Yeah.

FH:

Not that I know of.

AW:

So, it was—other than the wasteful part it was a good—

FH:

See, we went from the *Benevolence* once they got us back, put me on an attack transport with a destroyer. And Ted Dealey, owner of the *Dallas Morning News*, was on there, and he said, "Do your"—he interviewed me, saw my name from Fort Worth, he was from Dallas—"Do your folks know you're alive?" And I said, "No." He said, "They will within twenty-four hours." And it worked. And I was taken there, put on an LST—which is a big Atlantic ship tank—they had about three or four-hundred prisoners on there from all over, and we were on there a while until

MacArthur said, "No prisoners can leave until I've signed the peace treaty." So we're floating around out there in Tokyo Bay right close to the ship where they signed it. So after he signed it, we were taken to Okinawa and that's where this doctor was, and I was there about two weeks, and I tried to get somebody to let my folks know. And for some reason, they didn't want to do that, because maybe I'd die, see, or something. I don't know.

AW:

Yeah. What was your first job after? And how'd you come about it?

FH:

Well, see, I'm a graduate aviation engineer, Texas Tech.

AW:

And with some real experience.

FH:

And I got all this leave, sick leave, and just months of it. But while I'm still on terminal leave, I went out to—it was Convair then—and they hired—there were five of us aviation engineers, five, four of them went to work for Convair after the war, four. So we were hired—

AW:

And this is Convair where, in—?

FH:

Fort Worth.

AW:

In Fort Worth.

FH:

Yeah, bomber plant making B-24s and just first building the B-36. They hadn't flown yet, July of '45, '46. So we were hired in at a dollar and a quarter an hour, hourly, about as low as you could get. And of course, that's—but I'm not making enough money to go with my Ford and all these pretty girls I'm going with. So the B-36 is about ready to fly, XB, first one. So I went in to the chief of flight, and introduced myself to him, and I said, "I'm a flight engineer, B-29, and you need flight engineers on this airplane." "Yeah, we do." I said, "Well, good." He said, "We need a special type. We need an instructor engineer for the first air force cruise. We're going to start training them here in another few weeks." And he said, "You think you qualify that?" I said, "Of course. I know all about instructing." Hell, I've never instructed anybody my life. (laughter) Hired me. So I'm training six—I checked out first cruise, B-36 of course, about twenty of them.

But LaMay during the war—see, half the flight engineers on B-29s were commissioned like I was, and half of them were the top elite of the enlisted sergeants—top sergeants, half and half. And LaMay was going to promote these people to a second lieutenant job just like I was a second lieutenant, but he didn't get around to it, the war ended, so these guys were still sergeants, top. That's a high rank. And so, within two weeks after I checked one of these people out, they're promoted to captain. They outrank me. I'm a hero. I didn't care, hell of it, because—oh I tripled my salary too, I earned more when I got flight pay and all that. So, that worked pretty good. So I flew for—see that was '46—up till about I guess about 1950, something like that.

AW:

I've always—I always wanted as a little kid—I wanted to fly too, but I didn't get to fly in Trimotor, but we had a farm, and the crop duster pilots would fly over it, wiggle their wings at us, and sometimes they'd holler down wanting to know where a certain farm was. You'd point it off to them, you know. But as I got older and I would read all these books about test pilots which I thought, Boy, that's glamorous. But really, that's a pretty scary job.

FH:

Yeah, it is.

AW:

So you were going up in these aircrafts that were—?

FH:

Well, these were—we were test pilots.

AW:

That's what I mean.

FH:

We were flying—

AW:

You were flying—you were a test pilot.

FH:

These are green airplanes.

AW:

Yeah. What is that like? I mean, you have to have a lot of conviction.

FH:

Well, we really knew what we were doing. We were—I was well trained, and I fit right in with these other old time engineers. But we flew some pretty scary flights, and it's just what the limits of operation for all the B-36 was. Good airplane. Push her engine, six of them, get a fire, fuel and oil off, blows itself out. You get a fire on a B-29, that fire comes back across that fuel tank. But you talk about it on the farm, we did some bad things here in Lubbock, or I did. (laughter)

AW:

What did you do?

FH:

Well, I'd be flying up there, you know, just flying and doing things what I'm supposed to do all by myself. See a farmer down there plowing, close the—let the airplane idle, and I'd glide in right behind him and get right down right on his back, and slam the throttles forward. (laughs) If he'd had a shotgun—yeah, that was wrong.

AW:

I'd tell you though, if I had been—as a little kid, if I had been out there watching, I'd have had a good time.

FH:

Yeah, you bet. That was a good program.

AW:

Yeah.

FH:

Yeah. We were a dirt airfield out there, and then those Seabees or somebody put the airplanes in there when the glider—well the gliders out here on toward Levelland, and they had bombers and things out there. Yup.

AW:

So you—you were testing these 36s until 1950—?

FH:

About '50, '51, something like that.

AW:

What was your next—?

FH:

Well, I—and I make a speech about this—I've got three speeches I make: one's a POW and one is my last flight, and that's what I'm going to tell you about now.

AW:

Oh, good.

FH:

B-36, and what's the other one about? POW—I guess my industrial career. But the way this happened, the Cold War and Convair—well, we flew and set what the limits were on the B-36 on the air force tech orders and so on. But this same fellow, Gus Green, had us—no, it was Erickson—they had to have test pilots, who I was his flight engineer, he picked me over these old timers to be his flight engineer, so that made me feel good. He came right over and got me and he said, "Fiske, the air force over there has called me, and they want you to be a civilian observer for this special flight." I've forgotten—I think it was 1950 or something. I've got my log book which you'll get.

AW:

Oh, that'd be great.

FH:

He said, "Now, you're going to be an observer." He said, "I don't know exactly what this is about, but it's top secret." And he said, "It sounds kind of scary." The fact is the wing commander is the one that called him, a fellow by the name of Tom Garrity who was a—he was bird colonel, wing commander, and he said, "Now you can go over there, and just the way he described this to me, this may be something you don't want to do."

AW:

He's giving you your option.

FH:

Yeah, and Pratt & Whitney got tapped too. Stu Connelly became a vice president of United Aircrafts, made the engines on the B-30—damn good engines. So he was tapped too, and he and I were good friends, so I said, "Well, okay." And it's because these are people I checked out. So, Stu and I drove over there and went to the briefing. Oh, when I drove up to where the briefing was, one of the co-pilots that we had checked out said, "What are you doing over here, Fiske?" I said, "I'm going to fly on this secret flight." He said, "You are?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "Don't." (laughter)

AW:

That's pretty strong advice.

FH:

"What's that?" He said, "Well, this Captain 'S,' I won't give his name, is flying and he's cracked up about everything you can crack up." (laughter) He said, "I don't think if I were you, I'd do that." I said, "Well, thank you." So, I went on to the briefing, Connelly, and of course Connelly—all he did was engines—but I knew the whole thing. So the briefing, they told what they were carrying; now this is a—turns out to be a simulated bombing mission of Moscow, to blow Moscow off the map, only flown around the United States, same flight profile, dummy bomb in the back, and a ballast load up in the forward bomb bay just to simulate a second bomb. So I'm listening to all of this, and of course, I know the load adjuster and how to put things together and what the airplane could do and what it can't do, because I had my own stuff that I had, they had their tech orders, but I had more info than they did. So I'm looking at this; they can't make it, too heavy, twenty thousand pounds overweight.

AW:

That's a lot.

FH:

They'd go in the lake. And we'd had one at the air force that had taken off with two engines in reverse, which in essence gave them, out of the six engines, they only had two pushing. I told them, I said, "You're not going to make it. I don't want to go with you." Connelly said, "If he doesn't, I don't either." And I said, "Well, that's the way it is. You need to offload twenty thousand pounds. If you do, I'll go with you." Left. Well, I got back over to—was Convair then—Erickson came over there and he said, "I just have heard from the colonel again." And I said, "Yeah." "I go, well I told him about this. I also went to the chief engineer, the top guy. I told him what I'd seen. He said, 'You're a hundred percent right, Fiske. They're going to crash.'" So, I'm right. Erickson said, "They have offloaded twenty thousand pounds, and that's up to you. I'll call them up and tell them you're sick if you want." But Gary, this colonel, was going to make the takeoff. To me, that's the most dangerous thing of any flight, so I said, "No, I'll go because Erickson's making it—this guy's no good captain 'S.'" So, call in, I go back over there and we take off, fly, shoot guns. They do everything wrong, bad, but—except the flight engineer, this captain I had checked out, he's a good guy. And the colonel's sitting right there beside me, right back of the fellow, the pilot and co-pilot are right here, and we're sitting right there on this upper floor where the flight engineer is stationed, and I checked him out, so I know everything about everything. So, we dropped the missiles, you know, the bomb, and it does what it's supposed to do, you know, hits where it's supposed to and all of that. Shoot guns, fighters, American fighters are up there trying to shoot us down, see. We could outperform any Russian fighter and also American fighters for that matter.

AW:
Really?

FH:
Yeah. So we proved that we could bomb Moscow. Okay, well, that's over. Now we're flying just to stretch the range to show we can fly a hell lot further than Moscow, and so the engines are O's. Number five engine out of six was backfiring, so they feathered. I'm just sitting there watching all of this, they feathered which I agreed with. Backfiring no good. And so it had five engines. So, the colonel's sitting there, said, "We need to stretch this range more. Let's pull down the cooling on these engines and get more miles per gallon." And I—I mean they're right at the top temperature—engines.

AW:
So when you say pull the cooling back, you mean heat them up some more?

FH:
Yep. Close the cowl flaps. In other words, streamline them more.

AW:
Oh, yeah, so but it'll make the engines—

FH:
Get more miles per gallon.

AW:
—because of the streamlining of the aircraft, but it means the engines work much harder.

FH:
Well yeah, cuts down the drag, get more miles per gallon. I said, "No." He said, "Yes." I said, "This is no good. What do you think Connelly?" He said, "No. These things—you don't go above the red line." It's his engines. Okay, so they did. So then the scanner—the gunners back there real shortly begin to report heavy oil breathing out of all engines. I said, "Uh, oh." I said—

AW:
Now when you say heavy oil breathing, explain that for me.

FH:
I don't know. All I know is they were leaking oil, going back hitting the prop of frozen oil up again—banging into the fuselage.

AW:

So they were losing oil?

FH:

A hell of a lot of oil, yeah. We had two-hundred gallons per engine, and we had lights that came on at a twenty-eight gallons for some reason, lights, no oil quantity gauges then. So, I said, "I'm not asking you—" And this colonel's sitting right there, here's this no-good captain up there, and I said, "—I'm telling you, I don't know where we are, but I'm telling you to get back to Carswell and land. We ain't going to make it." "No." Said, "Well." So, I tap this captain on this. I said, "Watch those oil level warning lights, and when you see one come on, keep that engine running because we got torquemeters on them so we know when they're putting out power. I said, "Unfeather five," which is electrical power engine. So if we had feathered these other engines, we would have no power, it was electrical. So he un-feathered five until I—I'm running the airplane now. Bang. Light on. Bang. So they're all going down. And five is—we un-feathered it, and it's running, and it's backfiring, but it's still putting out power. That's good. So when that first level warning light came on, I said, "I'm not telling you now to go home. Get this airplane on the ground," and it just so happened we were over MacDill Field, Tampa, Florida, SAC base, Strategic Air Command. So, yeah, and they're feathering engines.

AW:

And landing without power is awful tough.

FH:

Well, I'm not through yet. (laughter) So, two, three, and four, these were alternator engines. The alternator took more power, so one, five, and six, that's all we have, and we're coming down. And we level out about a hundred feet altitude, coming right over the downtown Tampa, Florida. We were so low that newspaper photographer took a picture of this airplane. It was on the newspaper, front page the next day. So, we're coming in, and so they put the gear down, and he's just about ready to land, ten-thousand foot runway, long runway. He puts the gear down and the nose gear doesn't come down. I said, "Land anyway." We don't have enough power to make, go around. So, this dumb pilot got too much of the runway behind him before he decided to crash land, to slide in. I said, "We've done it." One airplane, it just makes a bunch of sparks. Well, then he decided he's going to ditch in Tampa Bay, and I know because that's the one I told you about went in the lake and drowned about half of them. So, I tap the captain on the shoulder and I said, "I'm going to take these propellers and go a hundred over rated RPM. Never been done before, and I want you to put the turbo boost at selector ten, that never gets above eight." Instead of thirty-five hundred horsepower, these engines are putting out—Connelly told me later—we're pulling over five thousand horsepower. That's good, so now this guy instead of ditching, he's flying with one, five, and six. Now, any damn good pilot knows that when you turn, you're going to turn into the best engines. He's got one, five, and six. He's should've turned right. He didn't.

AW:

He turned left?

FH:

He turned left. I said, "God." I turned to this colonel. I said, "You know what, colonel? This is my last flight." (laughter)

AW:

You were saying this before you got down?

FH:

Yeah, and he said, "Oh, Fiske," because I knew him real well, he said, "It'd be mine too, but I'm a career officer." So, we come around, of course, there's water in the line. We came down from high altitude. There's water in the line and frozen, so it thawed out and the nose gear came down. Boy, he made a nice landing right in the middle of the airfield, shut her down, stack base. The colonel, from there the colonel came out, and they'd gotten just the two ranking military guys—two colonels and me go to the base colonel's office—and they want to know what to do. Now, this is quite a story. It's the Cold War, and here's an airplane out. They can't afford to have an airplane out, so these—

AW:

And they can't afford to tell a story of "what are we doing," right?

FH:

Yeah, yeah. Garrity says, "What do we do, Fiske?" I said, "Well, you need to get this airplane flying again soon, right?" "Yup." I said, "Get you three engines, fly them in here,"—because I knew they had ways to do that— "and three engine change crews and a hydraulics expert from Convair, fly them in here." Now, this is on a Friday I guess it was, no, Thursday that we landed. The next morning, C-47 and a B-36 floated in with three engines in the bomb bays. They had a special deal I didn't even know about because they were ready for these kinds of things because LeMay said, "We fight the Russians. We're ready with everything we got." These crews went to get to work, Saturday morning, they had the engines changed and the guy got the water out of the system, the landing gear, and they took off and they flew me because I was going on vacation. So, flew me back, and I got in my car, and we went on vacation.

AW:

You didn't fly back in that 36?

FH:

Oh, no. I flew back in the C-47. (laughs) So, and then I went back, told Erickson. He said, "I don't blame you, Fiske." So I went back to engineering, so that's my story.

AW:

That's a great story.

FH:

And I say I make a speech about that.

AW:

That's a great story. I also noticed here that you helped on the Saturn.

FH:

Oh, yeah.

AW:

That's—now that's a little different kind of aeronautical engineering.

FH:

Well, when I quit flying, I went back to engineering, and I went into what's called manufacture research and development, and I set up, and we just started. I helped start it, and I was an executive and had about sixty people working for me. It could do anything. So, we led the world in advanced composites, and all kinds of welding; we helped with the Atlas Missile out with the San Diego people, taught them how to weld stuff that they couldn't handle, and we were good—hell, we even did research and welding for the Huntsville—Germans down there, Saturn V. So we had contracts running out our ears because I went down there, and of course with my background and so on, and these two Germans, Han Wuenscher, who was head of the ME department, mechanical engineering department, gave me three or four contracts on welding, doing all kinds of things, and then we had a contract that's in the picture somewhere here. For the Saturn V moon shot, instruments stay three foot high, two hundred and sixty inches in diameter, which is right below the crew module. Very important part. Bonded structure, which Germans didn't like much, but they did it because they had a weight problem and so on; it had all the instruments and so on. We didn't do the instruments. We did the structure. It was in three pieces, and they're just tickled to death with all this, all those Germans.

AH:

W-u-e-n-s-c-h-e-r, is that how you would spell his name?

FH:

Wuenschel, Wuenschel, I think it was Wuenschel. I think it was W-u-e-n-s-c-h-e-r, Hans. Yeah. I don't know. That may be in here.

AW:

I just—I was—wanted to get it close enough that I can look it up.

FH:

Because this talks about a lot of my—let's see, Wuenschel, no, nothing in—Mark Word's in here. He was in my—no, no it's not all in there.

AW:

That's all right. Growing up out here we had lots of—

FH:

But they came in there and, of course I was in charge of all of this, and I'm going to give the briefing on the—this big instrument, you know, this beautiful thing. "And if you want to run bombs, then I will tell them about this. That's no good for you," and he did.

AW:

He didn't want anybody else stealing the spotlight?

FH:

That's right. He's proud of this thing, and they've got it up in Dulles.

AW:

Really?

FH:

Up in Washington in their museum there.

AW:

What was he like to work with, or any of the German scientists?

FH:

Well, they thought they knew everything about everything. But me, hell, I'd been in with tough people all over everywhere, so I didn't have any trouble with it. And our VP operations who I worked for at Manufactured Technologies, B. G. Reid, was a glider pilot. Hans Wuenschel, the German, was a glider pilot, and they knew each other. And old B. G., every time I went down there, which was there for a couple weeks, he said, "Tell Wuenschel that we'll send out

corporate jet down there and pick him up, bring him up here, and we'd like to entertain him a little bit." So I'd go down there and tell old Hans that B. G., his glider pilot buddy, wanted to do that. This German pulled himself up. "Now you go down there and tell your buddy B. G. Reid that we have our own executive jets, and when I get ready, I will come see him." Go back, tell B. G., and he says, "Son of a bitch." (laughs) So I had a good career.

AW:

I also had heard—somebody had mentioned this story about—you had helped an employee who was Japanese.

FH:

Oh, yes.

AW:

Yeah, what was this—was—just a Japanese American citizen?

FH:

Well, that's quite a story. See, at Manufactured Technology, I had these people. They could do anything, and they depended on contractual people doing things and material and, you know, buying people stuff for our research development. And so this Oriental came into my office, he sat there, and I'm nervous around Orientals. His name was Bill Nagase. I said, "What's your heritage?" He said, "Japanese." I said, "Where are you from?" "Nagoya." I said, "Really?" He said, "Yeah. I came from Nagoya." I said, "I bombed Nagoya." "You did?" He said, "You burned down my house." And he didn't tell me this—I found this out somehow—killed his folks, but he and I became friends. He was a *Kamikaze* pilot within four days of being used when the emperor surrendered on August the fourteenth. And an American colonel in the occupation forces had the kid working. He was only fourteen years old. I guess he was sixteen at that point, but he'd been trained as a fighter pilot for *Kamikaze*. So thought enough of him, sent him to TCU. He married an American girl, went to work for Convair General Dynamics then, and became my friend.

AW:

How interesting.

FH:

Oh, the *Kempeitai* knocked out half his teeth, didn't like *Kempeitai*.

AW:

So he had that in common?

FH:

Yeah, you bet, and so yeah, said, "Me neither." So, we were on a panel together in Dallas, Daughters of World War II. Big deal, seven hundred people attended that, and so, had a moderator and we talked and. He got to be such a friend of mine, he won't do anything for anybody unless he clears it with me, and this is important. Just in the last few weeks, he called me up, he said, "Fiske, I have written my story, and I need your help to get it published."

AW:

Wow.

FH:

I said, "Oh, my. You got it." So a fellow called me from his house here just last week. He's a retired colonel or something but in the book business; and helping him, he said, "Fiske, you're not going to believe this. This guy's got a thing about four inches thick. I haven't read all of it." I said, "Well, I've been after him to give me a copy of the manuscript so I can study it." And he said, "We're going to get with you," because he said, "I have my contacts because I've written several books." And then on this Iwo trip I told you about—and maybe you know this guy because he's famous around here—his name is Davis Ford. He's taught here, UT Austin, A&M. He's the head of A&M's book publishing outfit.

AW:

Didn't he grow up here?

FH:

Oh, he's a good friend Al Sacco. Hell, they're great—he's here. He's going to be here today.

AW:

Oh, really?

FH:

Yeah. He went on his trip and he serves me out, and he's my buddy. My God, he's got people coming and earning and going, and Ernest Loin, I don't whether you ever heard of him, but he and I knew each other in G. D. [General Dynamics], and he was in the Europe theatre. Texas Tech graduate, taught here, and so, this guy knows all these people—tried to get him up here from Austin—but his health is not that good. And Sacco, he and I have become buddies because this guy, Davis, told me about him, Sacco, he's my old buddy, "He's a character, Fiske, like you are," and him. So, I'm looking forward to this evening because he'll be there.

AW:

Oh, yeah. Well that's great. We've only got a few minutes before time to get you—

FH:

Yeah, we have talked, and I'm going to talk.

AW:

No, that's good. That's the best thing. If you just nodded your head yes or no, it wouldn't make much of a—

FH:

Yes, so, if you do any writing here, I'd appreciate a copy of it.

AW:

That's exactly what I was—

FH:

Did I give you a card?

AW:

You did.

FH:

Yeah, it's right there.

AW:

We have a release form that we would like for you to sign which allows scholars—

FH:

You bet. Oh, I'm doing something that I don't like, and you need to know about it. I had a session yesterday with your book publishing people.

AW:

Texas Tech—

FH:

Burkholder, and I said—

AW:

Yeah, I edited a series over there, too.

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FH:

Yeah, and I said, "I'm not happy with you people putting out this paperback." And I said, "It's got to cease. You need to come out with a hardback." She said, "We can't do that." I said, "Well, we're friends, and then I'm Texas Tech to the hilt, but I'm going to have to pull the contract back." And she said, "I understand." And this guy's going to help me, because the University of North Texas—see they never pushed the—would you believe that I've only sold four hundred of these things? Last night I signed over fifty.

AW:

Yeah, I'd had thought it'd been a lot more than that.

FH:

Yeah, yeah, something's wrong, but it's not this girl—or this lady.

AW:

Well we—you know the presses—and I'll tell you this because like I said, I'm an editor of a series. (Andy gives Fiske the release form to sign) There are two copies. You only have to sign one, but I'm giving you another copy so you can have it for your records just right above—

FH:

Fiske Hanley.

AW:

Yeah, just however you want it. But while a few seconds, let me just ask you this: is there something I should have asked you about that I didn't?

FH:

Well, I don't know. I've covered a lot of land.

AW:

You have, but I wanted to make sure if there was something that you wanted to talk about that I didn't—not give you a chance.

FH:

I think you and I need to stay in touch.

AW:

We do. I'd like to—I'm interested in that book that—spell your friend Bill—

FH:

Nagase, N-a-g-e-s-e, Nagase.

AW:

Okay. We'd love to have a copy of that book when it comes out in our collection. And I am very serious about when you get back from that trip this fall, I'll come down to Fort Worth. That's not any problem.

FH:

Oh yeah, okay. Good.

AW:

I'm on the road all the time for Texas Tech, so I'd be happy to come down there.

FH:

Good, because I'm glad to be back in touch here. And I'm glad they found this. There are not very many of these left.

AW:

I knew we had one. It's just that, you know, we have a building full of stuff.

FH:

See, this thing came out in '94, I think, something like that. This is all pictures.

AW:

We have a building full of stuff, and sometimes it's not as easy to find that stuff as others.

FH:

But you found it.

AW:

Yeah, I know. I knew we would. Yeah. That's great. Well, let me just say thank you. We'll stop this in time enough for you to stop at the men's room or whatever, and I really appreciate—I really enjoyed it. What a great opportunity.

FH:

Yeah, 12:00, yeah, I'll be back from the meeting, our meeting. And that Jeff Klotzman's going to interview me at 12:15.

AW:

Yeah, you tell him hi for me. He's a good friend of mine.

FH:

Yeah. Yep. Good.

AW:

All right.

End of Recording



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