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Interview with Henry Clark

Henry Clark

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LOUISE PETTUS ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS
VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT

Interview VHP #003

Clark, Henry L.

CLARK, HENRY L.

Drafted: 1942 July 1 – 1946 January

Interviewed: October 26, 2005.

Interviewer: Will Atkinson

Index by: Gregory Lamb

Length: 00:28:45

Abstract:

In his October 26th, 2005 interview with Will Atkinson, Henry L. Clark recollects stories of his time in the Air Force serving with the 73rd Wing, 20th Air Force in Saipan and in the Pacific during WWII. Clark recalls seeing the Enola Gay take off to drop the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan. Clark also recalls fond memories of interactions with friends and loved ones upon informing them of his decision to enter armed service with the United States Air Force. This interview was conducted for inclusion into the Louise Pettus Archives and Special Collections Oral History Program.

Keywords: Maxwell Field, Enola Gay, Saipan, Tien Yien, Lieutenant Colonel, Chevrolet, Alabama, Air Force, 73rd Wing, 20th Air Force, General Curtis LeMays, Rock Hill, Rutgers’,

Interview Session (March 6, 2004): Digital File

Time	Topics of Discussion
00:00:00	<i>Start of Interview/Interviewer's Introduction;</i> asks Clark about what war and branch he served in.
00:00:40	Clark states that he was in WWII and served with the 20 th Air Force. Clark also talks about General Curtis LeMays.
00:01:14	Interviewer asks about Clark's rank and Clark replies that he was a Lieutenant Colonel.
00:01:21	Interviewer asks where Clark served and whether he was drafted or he enlisted. Clark replies that he served in the Pacific but her trained all of the U.S. WA: Where did you serve? Clark states that he was not a "draft dodger" and he didn't wait to be drafted. Interviewer asks why Clark enlisted and Clark replied that he was eligible and after he taught school for a year, he saw it as a way to serve his country.
00:02:22	Interviewer asks where Clark was living when he enlisted and how his family reacted to his enlistment. Clark replies that he was living in Rex, Georgia, and that his mother was surprised about his enlistment.
00:03:01	Clark is asked if he was married at the time, and replies that he was not, but two women had asked his permission before getting married to other men.
00:03:47	Clark is asked about the reactions of him and those he knew during the first events that led to WWII. Clark recalls where he was and who he was with when Pearl Harbor was attacked by the Japanese. Clark states that it was not a shock because he had five brothers and a sister who were well aware of what was happening at the time.
00:04:32	Clark is asked about the transition from civilian life to military service and what he first days in the service were like. Clark says that the transition was not difficult, however everything moved at a fast pace when he was an aviation cadet at Maxwell Field in Alabama. Clark is also asked about the difference between serving in his time and modern service, as well as if there is a difference of opinion towards war in modern times than there was back in WWII. Clark states that there was no air-conditioning and that it was quite hot in the Summer. Clark also states that he doesn't feel the attitude towards war is any different now than it was in WWII.
00:06:01	Clark is asked about the battles he witnessed in WWII and some of his most memorable experiences during his time in service. Clark re-states his unit of

service and talks about going from the Marianas to the Japanese mainland in B-29s. Clark also recalls a comical incident between himself and a woman named “Cookie” when he told her he wanted to say goodbye and to let her know that he was leaving to join the Air Force.

- 00:08:32 Clark talks about his experiences in the service and about having to build Quonset huts and trying to do it by himself but being told to let the lower ranking soldiers do the work. Clark also discusses the fact that he was an armament officer, chemical warfare officer, and was in charge of the remote control gunnery systems on the B-29s and B-52 bomber aircraft during his time in the Pacific.
- 00:11:05 (Background noise, and someone says “What’s good to eat?”)
- 00:11:08 Clark discusses how he stayed in touch with friends and family while he was serving in the Air Force. Clark also discusses that he has stayed in touch some with friends he made during his time in the service. Sadly, Clark states that a lot of the people he knew during his time in the service, are all dead.
- 00:12:41 Clark discusses being entertained by the USO and about seeing the Enola Gay, the plane that dropped the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, take off for its mission within eye sight of his tent. Clark also says that he felt glad when the Japanese surrendered.
- 00:14:08 In this section of the interview, Clark discusses his post military life and getting a graduate degree from Rutgers’ University. Clark discusses a good friend of his helping him to get established so that he could pursue his education after his time in the service had ended.
- 00:14:56 Clark is asked if he would recommend the military to this generation, and responds emphatically that he would. Clark then discusses his post military veteran’s benefits, and restates how proud he is to be retired from the United States Air Force.
- 00:15:30 Clark recalls a comical moment when he was at Maxwell Field and he received a telegram from a young lady who stated she was coming to visit him on the same weekend that he was leaving to Columbus, Georgia with one of his roommates to take other girls on dates. He recalls how he had a brand new Chevrolet and was driving 80 mph on his way to Ocala, Florida with his roommates, when he threw a rod and the car broke down. He recalls the manager of the shop not charging him very much to fix the car because he was in uniform. Clark then recalls when he was at his primary flying school in Ocala, Florida, trying to get a date with a young lady who he had been able to take out previously. This time, however, the young lady decline because the fleet had come in. Clark comically says that the young lady was okay as long as the fleet was out, but apparently not able to go on dates when the fleet was in.
- 00:19:40 Clark discusses the time of food he was introduced to during his time in the Pacific. Clark comically states that they did not know if it was horse meat or cow

meat. Clark also states that he was not particularly fond of the boiled fish they had to eat sometimes.

- 00:20:58 Clark is asked again about his life and career after his military service. Clark reiterates that he attended Rutgers'. Clark also states that he got married after he received his commission from Yale in 1944. Clark also talks about various veteran's organizations that he joined after his military service had ended.
- 00:22:05 Clark goes on to talk about reunions and states that he did not attend any because he would not have seen all of the friends he made during his time in military service and he feels that he would not have known anyone in attendance.
- 00:22:52 Clark is then asked about the length of time he has lived in Rock Hill, South Carolina. Clark says that he moved to Rock Hill, South Carolina on March 15, 2001. WA: How long have you lived in Rock Hill? The interviewer asks Clark if he has a talent for remembering dates because Clark has been so specific when asked certain questions, but Clark just attributes it to being the same as any other person's memory.
- 00:23:38 Clark is asked about the effect that his service and experience had on his life. Clark recalls the change of pace that came with military life, but states that it fit quite well with his civilian life.
- 00:24:22 Clark recalls travelling to different places on his two week tours while in the Air Force Reserves. Clark remembers a time when he wore a civilian suit to the Officer's Club on post in Denver, Colorado and being mistaken for an employee of the Pentagon because there were no facilities in Denver at the time to house visiting personnel from the Pentagon.
- 00:25:38 Clark adds that he saw his service as an opportunity to serve his country and that he never thought about turning away from service. He welcomed the challenge. Clark also states that his military service benefitted his life more than any other venture he undertook.
- 00:26:40 At this point in the interview, Atkinson addresses a previously unnamed person and asks him questions about Clark. The unknown interviewee states that Clark is one of the nicest people there and that Clark is religious and cares about family life. The unknown interviewee discusses his knowledge of Clark having spent a long time in the military service, then is asked by Atkinson about his own military career. The man states that he was in the Air Force for 54 months during WWII and served in Europe during his time. The man then inquires about the nature of the interview and the interview then ends.
- 00:28:45 Interview ends.