

# Oral History Interview



1st Lt. Bruce Hubbard  
11th Army Air Force  
World War II  
Aleutian Islands, Alaska

February 12, 2014  
March 13, 2014

---

Aleutian World War II National Historic Area  
Oral History Project

## **Contents**

Transcripts of February 12, 2014 & March 13, 2014 Interviews

DVD: 1) Transcript of February 12, 2014 & March 13, 2014 Interview  
2) Audio of February 12, 2014 & March 13, 2014 Interview  
3) Images and Documents

CD: 1) Audio of February 12, 2014 & March 13, 2014 Interview

---

**Bruce Hubbard**  
February 12, 2014 & March 13, 2014

**Aleutian World War II**  
**Oral History Project**

---

---

**Interview with 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Bruce Hubbard**

**Aleutian World War II National Historic Area  
Oral History Program**

**February 12, 2014  
Seattle, Washington**

Interviewed by Joshua Bell, Volunteer Oral Historian and Researcher, National  
Park Service

*This interview is part of the Aleutian World War II National Historic Area Oral History Project. The interview with Bruce Hubbard was recorded with his permission on a digital recorder. Copies of the audio file are preserved in mp3, wav and wma formats and are on file at the offices of the National Park Service in Anchorage, Alaska.*

*The transcript has been lightly edited.*

-----  
[Start of recorded material 00:00:00]

**Joshua Bell:** Today is February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2014. My name is Joshua Bell, volunteer oral historian and researcher for the Aleutian World War II National Historic Area. Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for the oral history project Mr. Hubbard. For the record could I have you state your name?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:00:21] Yes, it's Bruce Hubbard, with a middle of initial of M that I sometimes I use. And I was born and raised in Seattle, Washington.

**Joshua Bell:** And when were you born?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:00:35] January 30<sup>th</sup>, 1924, I just celebrated a few days

---

ago my 90<sup>th</sup> birthday.

**Joshua Bell:** Oh, very happy birthday.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:00:50] Thank you, I never though I'd live so long.

**Joshua Bell:** What were your parents' names?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:00:58] My father's name was Harry, and my mother had an old fashioned name of Alta, A-L-T-A. They were just like I am lower middle class, and my father was a mechanic in a lumber mill for many years until the Depression came along. And then he - like so many others - was unemployed and finally got on as a mechanic with Boeing Aircraft. Early on prior to World War II when there were rumblings and things happening that was leading us to that war.

[00:01:59] My dad was without a college degree as I am also, and he was just clever in doing things with his hands, mechanical work, carpenter work whatever. He would figure things out and do them. And the lack of degree didn't stop him from that. Anyway I was--

**Joshua Bell:** [Talks over] What did your mom do?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:02:34] Beg your pardon?

**Joshua Bell:** What did your mom do?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:02:37] She was just a housewife. She kept the home together. And at that time I don't know if you have any mental picture of what the world was in 1924, but it was pretty simple. I remember my dad with a friend bought a piece of logged off land north of the city limits, and divided it in two so they both had two and a half acres. And our piece had a natural spring on it, which was our water supply. And anyway he built a house just after I was born. I was the third and last child of theirs, and decided that living in the city was too expensive, and did this land purchasing thing and built a house.

[00:03:45] And I of course had to grow up to it, but I finally reached the

---

point where I could think about things and realize that that feat of building a house out in the country without any electricity at a time when of course you didn't have any electrical tools was a pretty wonderful thing. And it turned out that I and my wife and four daughters lived in the house for ten years until 1968. It had been sold as a property. It had been sold and I was hurting for housing without any money and ended up putting together an idea that called for moving a vacated and vandalized little house on a good sized corner lot.

[00:04:52] And moving it into position so I could move the house my dad built from where it was to, to join this other home and put the two together. I've been doing it for 45 years and I'm not finished yet. I don't know if I'm going to live that long. But anyway, it satisfied my low income status to learn to do my own work instead of paying for it. And it made me appreciate houses and people who build them a lot more, and be happy for what I have.

**Joshua Bell:** What was it like, you said it was simple growing up in the 20s and the 30s, what was it like?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:05:52] Well, of course they didn't know anything else, but it was less complicated than nowadays. Less concerned with grief that comes from people, everyone seemed to get along very well. There wasn't much money. You had to work for what you get, and of course you didn't get much. So you existed and you got along, and people seemed to be relatively happy. At least more so than appears that way now according to what you read in the paper anyway.

**Joshua Bell:** What did you do for fun?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:07:00] For fun? Well I just I'm kind of a loner type, and I entertained myself. Particularly on the property with the spring and the creek and lots of woods, and I'd climb trees, and make up, play-act stories you know. And when I got old enough to get a bicycle that made another world where I could travel around the countryside and see new people and new things. And I'd end up with little odd jobs that people needed done that only kids can do it seems.

---

[00:08:00] Anyway that was, the fun or not fun wasn't something you thought much about. Things just happened, and you made out of them what you could in a way of entertainment.

**Joshua Bell:** Very good. So to go from that simpler time it must have been quite a shock when war broke out in Europe.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:08:32] Well, yeah, things changed. Actually that war breaking out in Europe was a clue to what was going to happen and where our country was going to be, yeah in, in respect to that war. And so there was some little time to prepare, although not completely adequate amount of time. And people kind of had to hustle. My dad ended up working for Boeing Aircraft Company, and did all through the war. I had a older brother and a older sister, and they easily found jobs.

[00:09:38] My brother went on to college and ultimately into the -- went to work at Boeing. And how easy it was for people to get a job in those days and so forth that, and I in fact went to work to Boeing also.

**Joshua Bell:** And what year was that?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:10:06] Oh you know, I don't know. It'd be about 1942. I graduated from high school in the middle of the year, and went from high school to work for Boeing. And that would be about January or February perhaps of 1942.

**Joshua Bell:** Not long after Pearl Harbor happened.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:10:44] Yes, right. Pearl Harbor and then there was a lot of trauma from that. And as people went into the service everyone wanted to do their part. I had worked a part time for a couple, a childless couple that came into our neighborhood, to reopen a feed store that had loaned and vacant. And the man wanting to be his own boss in employment so they did that. It was about ten blocks I guess from where I lived, and I was about the only kid in the neighborhood that went around looking for work.

---

[00:11:47] And I would, you know, do what I could for coins. And this couple, well the man got sick. He got a cold I think it was, and put him out of business for a little bit. And his wife asked the people if the corner, this was an active business corner with a gas station and a beer parlor and a few things including this vacant feed store building. And they asked if they knew any kids, well I was the kid in the area. So I got a call, and gladly went to work nights after school and Saturdays delivering feed from this store.

[00:12:44] Which was pretty good, yeah I was just old enough where, you know, I had a driver's license and was wanted. And got to drive, and what else could you do for a kid other than pay him some money too. And so that worked out very well, and that couple took care of me very well. They were very nice. They were, they didn't spoil. When I got out of line I was told about it, and we turned out to be friends for many years. And this man wanted to contribute to the war effort, so he followed the ads and the radio, and went to a Boeing training school downtown.

[00:13:49] And it was at night, and he asked me to go with him, and which I did. And one night some guy from Boeing came there with a suit on, you know, a white shirt and a tie. And that was important stuff then in those days. A tie meant a lot, and – anyway – started asking of the attendees what their schooling amounted. And said he was going to read off a list of areas of learning, and if had any experience in that raise your hand.

[00:14:42] So he read off the list of courses that you'd take in high school and after a while I was the only one raising my hand. And he finally stopped, and he asked me, you know, "If you've had anything along this line that hasn't read off yet?" And I said, "Well yes, I had one course in calculus and one course in blueprint reading." Well, of course that was great for them what they were looking for. They wanted someone to be a trainee jig mechanic, and I don't know if you know what a jig is.

**Joshua Bell:** No, no I don't.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:15:37] Oh well it's an object that's used to make parts from, make another, another item that's going to be used in manufacture, and

---



they have to be the same. And so they make them off of a jig. It could be a drill jig or a shaping jig or whatever, and they're made to a 5000<sup>th</sup> of an inch tolerance. Well, anyway, the guy said for me not to go downstairs and practice with their machinery to talk to him instead. And so he offered me a job on the spot, and I went home and woke up my dad and told him what happened, and "Should I take it?" And he drowsily said it's probably the best opportunity in my life.

[00:16:37] And so I went to work for Boeing as a trainee jib mechanic, and it was quite an experience. It was like the going into the service it was quite an experience, and I kept thinking I wish all kids can get experiences like that so they understand the workings of the world a little better and understand responsible activity. So anyway, I worked at Boeing, went through several mechanics. They kept raising me, and then I could work with a higher up mechanic. Until finally one day my supervisor he said, "I couldn't do that anymore.

[00:17:40] I had to go back to another mechanic, because the union didn't like what was happening." I was getting too fancy for what I was being paid, and I said, "The easy solution to that is pay me more." And they couldn't cause they'd raised me as fast as they could. And they, unless I wanted to go to school, and then they could make an exception. Well what would I take at school? And they listed all these things I'd already taken. And I asked, "Well can't we just sit down the union guy, and you, the supervisor, and me, and explain all this. You know, there would be a, only thing that happened I would repeat course I'd already taken.

[00:18:42] I don't see how that makes me any more valuable. Can't we just talk it out? And if you can think that what I've had is sufficient and just pretend like I had taken it again, and we go from there." "Well, no we couldn't do that." And I never got a good answer of why they couldn't do that. I thought you know, life was simple for someone my age that all you had to do was discuss stuff and at the end of the discussion you either all understood even if you didn't like it that there was a reason for it being the way it was. But that didn't happen, so I had a high school friend working for a man that was working in a shipbuilding yard where they were building the

---

first metal minesweeper.

[00:19:55] And the first ship has to, everything has to be weighed. So when they got through you knew how much the ship weighed. And anyway my friend was working with a nice guy and doing this business of weighing everything, and standing at the entrance to the walkway to the boat. And everybody that was carrying something aboard would have to stop and have the stuff weighed, and amount entered into a book. And what they didn't do was answer a cry that they heard from a supervisor that they need somebody who could drill and tap a holes in the, in steel plates to put down in the hull in the bottom of the hole to make walkways.

[00:21:00] The guy that was doing it was breaking bits, and I can't even say the words now the thread cutting device. And they weren't getting anywhere. So I said, "Yeah, well I had done that already at Boeing." And it was an ugly place to work because they were welding and galvanized steel, and didn't have adequate pumps to change the air. So it was miserable what you were breathing.

[00:21:39] But anyway, I drilled and tapped and screwed down the steel plates for the whole walkway in that section of the boat. And the foreman asked me when I got out of the boat at the end of the day how I did, "How many drills did you break?" And I said, "None." "How many taps had you broken?" I said, "None." "How many plates did you get down?" I says, "The whole thing it's done." And he couldn't believe it. So anyway I said, "Well, you can go look." But anyway, I had to leave that welding smoke environment. I asked if they couldn't do something better than that. And they claimed that he couldn't. He had all those facilities they would allow him.

[00:22:43] And so I talked my friend's boss into having me as another helper helping weigh the boat. And that helped, it helped until I forget exactly what all happened. But anyway I finally got called in the service and started in another direction.

**Joshua Bell:** So Uncle Sam found you?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:23:21] Uncle Sam picked me up with 200 other guys

---

and put us all on a train, and sent us to Sheppard Field, Texas for basic training. And it's really basic, you know, you learn to make your bed, and you sit in a long line of toilets if you have to go to the toilet. And there is many bodies trying to take a shower at the same time with a room with multiple showerheads. And they need to teach you basics about marching and one thing or another. But I think we all on that train had the same advantage where we were going to universities from the Canadian border down to Oregon.

[00:24:31] And all the universities at that time I guess were following the same edicts from the military. And they created the military type obstacle course, so that you would you know, you could get some pre-training of what the military was asking of everybody including marching, the drill marching, and the manual arms you went through that. So anyway they had instructors that would take a certain amount of skids out of our barracks, and take us to the drill fields and to teach us how to march.

[00:25:25] And you would go through some explanations and what commands were, and now let's try it. And they would try it, and we'd all do it. And like we had done it for some time, and the trainer was astounded. And the same thing happened when it come to drilling, you know. We all knew what right face, or left face, or that stuff meant. And they were again astounded. They took us by the supply house and gave us some rifles, and went out on the street. And the trainer would stand on the porch of the barracks and show us what the manual of arms commands were and how it went.

[00:26:23] We okay?

**Joshua Bell:** Oh yes, still good. Still good. How did you pick up all this stuff?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:26:33] How'd we pick that up? Well--

**Joshua Bell:** Yeah, you said you were working?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:26:38] At the university, at the university, I'm saying

---

the universities gave all that training at the time.

**Joshua Bell:** Okay, so you--

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:26:47] So we were pre, pre-trained by universities that we were going to.

**Joshua Bell:** Okay, which university were you at?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:26:57] University of Washington.

**Joshua Bell:** Okay, so when the government, when Uncle Sam sent you the papers and you had to leave you went to the University of Washington first?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:27:09] No, no, no before. I went to the University of Washington first period. And then I got involved with Uncle Sam by applying to be accepted as an aviation cadet in the Army Air Corp.

**Joshua Bell:** Okay, what did your parents think about all that?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:27:39] Oh, they didn't think anything bad about it. I think my dad was probably more interested than my mother. But she realized she couldn't hide from the situation, it was worldwide. So you know, good luck. So anyway, when I finally then got called in and left University of Washington and was picked up by this train that was being made up of about 200 and some kids, and we went to that Sheppard Field in Texas. That was the real beginning of the Army life then.

[00:28:39] And that's, it was a kind of a learning thing I'm sure for the military, because the military coaxed the universities to put up these obstacles courses and these basic training sessions in the manual of arms and drilling and so forth. So we got out of Sheppard Field, Texas in the shortest time that anyone ever had. Because we had already learned what they were going to teach us. And they couldn't believe it that usually when you, particularly in your marching you know, when you the maneuver that's the funniest is the reverse march you know.

[00:29:39] When they give that command some people reverse and some

---

don't, and then just it's like a, what's that something and Hardy?

**Joshua Bell:** Oh Laurel and Hardy?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:29:56] Yeah, it looks like a skit that they would do all these guys doing different directions and they're supposed to be going one. Well it's kind of funny except for the trainer. But anyway, we got through that basic training real fast. And when you go in you go in from the train to the facility in the Army trucks. And people were leaning out the windows and yelling you'll be sorry, because here comes another batch of green horns and they'll learn the hard what it's like to be in the service etcetera. And so when we left we yelled back, "You'll be sorry. You're going to have to stay there longer than we did."

[00:30:56] So anyway it was childish. It was childish stuff but it was healthy vigor and humor. So anyway we went from there to a facility that was being made as we went there. It was in a place called still water Oklahoma, and it was a college town. And the college was agreeing to give training to us. And it was a kind of a stalling tactic, but it was because the line, the assembly line so to speak was too crowded and it couldn't move fast enough to take care of the people coming in.

[00:31:57] So they had to park them in places like this, and the schools would agree to give something, lessons on math and meteorology and stuff they thought that we could use in our endeavors in learning to fly and so forth. So that's what happened, we went to a place where we were given a lot of ground school and again basic military stuff. And everything that we did that we found out later really wasn't planned it was forced because they couldn't do anything better. But all that basic stuff that was going on to kill time and to keep us busy and learning something was of value.

**Joshua Bell:** Do you know, I'm sorry, do you know if that was part of the Army Specialized Training Program?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:33:06] I don't know. I don't know what, to me and all the people that were involved it was just what we thought was just what would be given for the aviation cadet program. And finally we did go to the

---

flying field, and it was really, really elementary. It was basic. It was little 65 horsepower Luscombe two place planes that were kind of crude, and they didn't even have brakes. You had to learn to stop them in some way without brakes because they didn't have them then.

[00:34:07] And you got, each guy got ten hours, and you got a logbook to log these ten hours. And the instructor would make comments after each trip. And I remember that I felt pretty bad because they thought I was just a kid at heart, and that was not a compliment because I was supposed to be a man you know. And anyway we went to that, and then--

**Joshua Bell:** [Talks over] Can you, can you tell me a little bit about your first flight?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:34:47] Oh, I don't know that I can recall all the details of it. I can say something I'll put in front of that, and that is when I was at Boeing I was with a premium mechanic. And he and other had asked me to stay. They said they can get me deferred. And I says, "No I want to learn to fly." "Well you know, get deferred you make good money." "No, I want to fly." "Have you ever flown?" "No." And the man said, "Would you like to go flying?" I said, "Sure I'd like to go flying." Well he says, "I have an airplane over in [Clay Allen], and usually on the weekend I go over there and I practice a little bit.

[00:35:48] You want to go with me this Sunday?" And I said, "Sure." So he came by my house and took me over. And then everyone who had a plane like he couldn't have it on the west side of the Cascade Mountains. It had to be over in Eastern Washington. It couldn't be on the coast. That would kind of hinder protective activity to have the little planes like that buzzing around. So they made them all go east of the mountains, and so that's where his plane was. So anyway we went there and we went up in the air. And one time I looked over and I saw him looking at me and grinning from ear to ear. And I wondered, well what's so funny? And then he said, "You."

[00:36:47] He says, "I've never had a guy ride with me that looked as relaxed." And I was just sort of lounging there looking out the window, it

---

was beautiful. It was fun looking from up there. -- Pardon me, I started coughing. -- But apparently I was too casual for him, not too casual, but enough to make him laugh. So anyway we finally ended that and he said he enjoyed me as a passenger. And I told him that I enjoyed being a passenger. It was fun. And I was more convinced than ever that that's what I wanted to do. So when I did go flying in the military the first time you went through three stages.

[00:37:48] Three different planes, and it was called primary, and basic, and advanced. And if you passed all those at the end of advanced you got a commission to second lieutenant, and you got your wings as a pilot. And the instructors would be different quality and so forth, and you were lucky if you got a good one. And in primary I got a pretty good one, but I got tested by a jerk, and it caused a little furor. And they wanted to can me, and I got interviewed by the commander of my unit. [00:38:46] And he's trying to tell me, "You know, it's for you own good." And I didn't believe that, and I says, "No, no if somebody told you now that your flying was not quite acceptable and you should quit cause you might kill yourself would you quit?" And he had to say, "No." And I says, "Well that's my attitude too." "So okay, we'll give you a little more chance." And so--

**Joshua Bell:** What was the big rub?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:39:25] Huh?

**Joshua Bell:** What was the big rub?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:39:30] Well I don't know. He said I didn't count the turns right in the spin. You know, what a spin is? Where you make the plane spiral down? Well I was supposed to have not counted the number of spins right, and this guy was -- had mannerisms that were very objectionable. And he was chewing tobacco and spitting it, and telling me that I couldn't count. And I got upset about that, and then the commander tried to -- accepted what this man told him. And kind of was talking me out of accepting it, and so that I don't kill myself until I said that same thing to him, you know, about if someone said that you might kill yourself you should quit.

---

[00:40:36] And so I got a second chance. And then these instructors in primary were civilians. They only had military people as a check pilot, and I don't know what. They had just a handful of military people on the field. Well anyway the military guy then was obligated to give me a check ride, and he said he couldn't see anything wrong. So they let me continue on, and I passed the training session like everybody else did. And went on to basic training, which was what they call the BT-13. Of course all those planes are obsolete now.

[00:41:33] The primary was a PT-19, which is a tandem plane without a covering. It's open. And a 175 horsepower Franklin engine, which is a six cylinder inline engine mounted upside down so that the propeller was hooked almost directly to the crank shaft to get it higher off the ground. And you hand cranked the starter. It was an inertial started, so someone had to crank the heavy flywheel till it got up to a good enough speed to engage with the crankshaft. And that got it turning over, and so it would start and you would go.

[00:42:30] Well, I ended up getting one, co-owning a plane like that after the war, except I didn't have enough money to keep it and better it. So I had to get rid of it. But anyway we went to basic, and you did learn night flying and various more fancy things. I had a excellent instructor, just a wonderful man. He was big in physical stature and he was big in knowledge and mannerisms and teaching ability. And he scared the hell out of you at first until you watch him operate, and he was really a pussycat inside.

[00:43:29] He was for everybody that he was working with. All that macho stuff was just to help him accomplish what he wanted to accomplish, and it worked. He one time took the stick and made it go side to side, and so it banged my legs. And I look up in the mirror, and I can see him looking in the mirror at me. And he's mad, he's balling me out, so he says, "You know, put some heft to the stick when you want to make these turns make the turns. Don't dawdle around." Well anyway I got mad at that, so I says, "Well it's worse than the backseat than it is in the front. So we'll see how this works out."

---



[00:44:34] And I made those turns so damn sharp, you know, if you make them too sharp you stall. And so I would just make them above stall and do figure 8 turns is what we were doing. And it made him happier, so and it made me happier. And then I forget now we got into a fracas one day when a plane cut in front of me. When you come in for landing you got all these planes out and all coming in at once. And so there is a long line of airplanes. And they go in slower and slower going into the field, and I was out at the end of this long line that was going slow. And it's kind of hazards cause you're only 500 feet in the air.

[00:45:31] And if you stall you don't have much time or room to catch yourself. And so you're never supposed to cut in front of anybody and get in that line that way. You go to the end, and a plane cut in front of me. And when were turning to turn to go the same way the line was going I could see a profile of the plane. And there was two people in it, so that meant that there was an instructor aboard. An instructor shouldn't be cutting in front of people, and I told my instructor. Finally I worked up the courage to tell him. I didn't really want to cause somebody to get in trouble, but it seemed kind of wrong to me that an instructor would allow that kind of a thing to happen.

[00:46:30] And he says, "Now wait for me." He says, "I'll be back." And he charges out of the room, and in about 20 minutes he came back and he says, "Well that instructor will never do that again." And I kind of laughed inside. I'd hate to have him be mad at me and come charging to correct my ways. I'd melt into the floor. That and some other things, well night flying he would go back to the parking area and he won't let me shut off the engine that I thought I was supposed to do. And he holds the throttle, and he says, "Just keep it running." And he gets out of the backseat and ties up the seat belts, and closes the canopy.

[00:47:32] And he comes up the wing and leans inside, so he's away from the prop wash and close to my ear so I can hear. And he puts his arm around my shoulder. Well that was kind of strange for a macho guy. And he says, "Have a good flight son." And I realize he wasn't one to be afraid of unless you were doing things wrong. So I went off for my first night flying experience, which is very interesting. And anyway the instructor in advance

---

was equally nice, not so macho, but nice and heavy concern for your welfare and your rate of learning and so forth.

[00:48:42] And the only thing that I caused a little trouble with is that I wanted to be a fighter pilot, and they wanted me to be a bomber pilot. And I said, "If I wanted to just go straight and level all the time I could've become a railroad engineer." And I think that really seemed to make a point and all arguments stopped then. They understood and that's the way it is. I want to really fly and use the plane for all its capabilities.

[00:49:32] And you do that with a fighter plane. And so they let me go up to fighter school, and that's what happened. I ended up flying P-40s in it, which are obsolete fighters. And flew them and then three other guys and myself were held over and didn't go on with the class. And we couldn't figure that out cause we were made instructors, and we'd never had any instructor training and never got any. And we didn't figure that out until we got orders to go to our duty assignment. And we had hoped to go to Hawaii where you got training in P-51s.

[00:50:34] And I really wanted to fly that P-51, well--

**Joshua Bell:** [Talks over] The mustang is a pretty bird.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:50:41] Yeah, and anyway we were sent to the supply shack to get our equipment for overseas. And the first thing the sergeant was to reach down under the counter and bring up and set on top of the counter a pair of mukluks. And those were our leather boots with fur lining, and I know they didn't use those in the South Pacific. And so there went our P51 dream, and the four of us were sent off to Montana. And from Montana to Anchorage, and from Anchorage down to the Aleutian Chain to the very end, which is a island of Attu.

[00:51:39] And we were replacements for four people who had had their allotted time serving in the Aleutians. And we still didn't understand what was going on. Well--

---

**Joshua Bell:** [Talks over] What was your first impression of the Aleutians?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:52:04] Oh, that's quite an experience. You know, what they are is just mountain peaks sticking out of the water, very little in the way of flat places. And the only flat places were, that I saw though I really didn't actually see all of the Aleutians, I flew over them and sometimes you could see them sometimes you couldn't. But anyway at the west half anyway the only flat places would be what man had made for airfields and places for living and so forth. They were very rugged, nothing growing,

[00:53:04] very cold looking most of the time. They had summers where the snow would melt a great deal, but nothing else would tell that it was summer hardly. Lots of wind, lots of fog or low lying clouds, just sort of a desolate mass of mountain peaks.

**Joshua Bell:** Had you heard of them before you were assigned to them?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:53:46] No, I might have heard of them, but not to the extent of remembering that, you know. Well we still couldn't figure out why the four of us were sent there, you know why we went through that instructor business at advanced school where we were still flying P-40s.

**Joshua Bell:** I forgot to ask what fields were you assigned to? You said you were in Texas for basic.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:54:34] Oh yeah, the basic let's see if I can think.... Sheppard Field, I can't come up with the primary field where we flew the PT-19s. I may later, but I'm stuck now. My head doesn't function very well anymore. I don't know whether I told you already. I turned 90 January 30<sup>th</sup>, but before that I started to kind of deteriorate where I'm not very sharp.

**Joshua Bell:** Well it sounds like you're remembering quite a bit as far as all this other stuff goes, so.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:55:39] Well you know, it's like they make jokes about old people they remember what happened 60 years ago but not 6 minutes

---

ago. That's true, and it's just something about the human creature how they work. Basic was, now I can't even say that one. It was between Sherman and Dennis in Texas, and the advanced was, gee I'm forgetting things. I must be under a little bit of pressure because I'm not thinking.

**Joshua Bell:** They'll come to you later.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:56:44] Huh?

**Joshua Bell:** They'll come to you later.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:56:47] Okay, anyway that's not, that's talking about me more than it is the Aleutian Islands. There is a lot of little stories about flying and overseas training came from the advanced field where we flew P-40s. And then they armored them, and you'd drop bombs. And you, which were dummy bombs, and you did combat so to speak. You had a bomber field down south of where we were at Colorado Springs.

[00:57:48] And the bombers would come up and we'd attack them, and it would get pretty wild and scary. And it's true for everybody. We'd go zipping by a bomber and we could see the guy staring with eyes and mouth wide open, and you could almost read their mind. They wish they were back on the ground, and you wanted to say me too buddy. But this is what we got to do, and in combat it'll be just as bad. So anyway, we got sent to this Attu Island and learned to fly under those conditions where you're always over water.

[00:58:49] Your indoctrination flight was when you'd be number six man, the last man of a flight, and you'd get in trail and the leader would do all sorts of stunts. And each guy in order would do the stunts too, and of course it must have been a must do maneuver where you would dive down on the water and you'd go just above the water a little bit, point it a little bit up and do a slow roll. And that's supposed to show something either you're absolutely crazy, or very very brave. And I said, "Well god we're going to have to go some day. Today is just as good as any other one.

[00:59:54] So I'll do it too." But I noticed the nose of my plane seemed to be

---

pointed up a little more than the other guys' when I did the slow roll. No one went boo or anything like that so I got away with that. So and then it got to be that doing slow rolls over the water and on take off and all that kind of stuff was necessary to keep your ego healthy. And there wasn't much to do except the [spot] was divided into flights, and each flight would sit on a red flight they'd call it. And that was guarding the territory. You were subject to the radar controller.

[01:00:57] And you'd sit in the operations hut. They were sort of Quonset hut type things, and when the bell would ring you'd run like the dickens for you plane. And the crew chief would run like the dickens from his Quonset hut for the plane, and start up the gasoline putt-putt that was a generator. And the wire would already be plugged into the plane, he'd leave it that way. And so the putt-putt was going, and then he'd come and climb up on the wing and you were getting in the cockpit and trying to get your safety harness buckled up and not mixed up with a wire from your helmet, which would be to your earphones and the microphone.

[01:02:01] And at the same time you'd be starting the plane, which would be pushing the plane that would make the motor run heavy inertial starter wheel. And the crew chief would be on the wing alongside of you, and if he had to straighten out all these belts and wires and stuff. And you were sitting on them, he'd just grab you and pull by the shoulders and pick you up in the air. It was kind of funny thing, but they did a great job.

**Joshua Bell:** You ever have that happen to you?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:02:47] Yep, I sure have. And of course you never wanted to fail to start the thing and have to start over again. That's really bad, and but anyway you get started and you'd go unless there was already somebody in your path. You'd give a little deference to the flight leader, cause he should be the leader. And he takes off down the runway, and we were all in order following and sometimes not in order. But anyway and he would fly up maybe to two or three thousand feet and make one turn. And he would have plugged into the channel, it's a VHF type radio.

---

[01:03:52] And they just push a button and hook up with a controller who would give him the direction and the power settings of the plane to go. The power settings would usually be by code where they have a code to tell you, which would tell you what power settings to set. And in that one circle the rest of the flight was supposed to gather up in proper formation on the leader. And off you'd go looking for whatever it was the radar controller thought he was seeing on his screen. And that was yeah, often times in fact most of the time the war with the Japanese people had been over by the time I got there.

[01:04:57] And they were all gone from the islands, so the only thing we had to chase would be the Navy [PVs] they would call them. Vultee made them, and they were twin-engine intermediate type bombers. Ugly as can be fast as the dickens, and they would come back and they would not turn on their IFF, which is identification friend or foe. That's a radio and the frequencies were coded and they would change them frequently. It wouldn't be the same one so they could be copied you know, and used. Anyway, we'd go heading in the way the radar controller would tell us.

[01:06:00] And we would usually guess correctly that it was a Navy plane coming back without turning on their IFF. And that would be a radio connection where they would be identified and you'd know they were not foe. Otherwise if they didn't do that you wouldn't know you'd just be guessing what they were, and you'd have to guess that they were foe to make sense out of the whole arrangement. So if we'd find them we'd do slow rolls in front of them just to give them a little turbulence to fly through. And then they'd get mad, and they'd complain about that. And we would just smile sweetly and say, "Well if you had turned your IFF on that wouldn't have happened."

[01:06:55] So that was the serious work that we were doing. And finally it changed near the end of the war when we got a brand new latest model P38, P-38-15s with specially modified. They were beautiful machines, and so much better. Tricycle gear for one thing with the wheels spread wide, and they did not have any tendency to ground versus the P-40 that was a ground

---

loop master.

[01:07:55] And carried a good load of arms, four 50 caliber machine guns, and one 20 millimeter cannon, and two, one under each wing, two Christmas tree rocket launchers, and a couple of bombs, had extra wing tip tanks in them and the hook ups were two exterior gasoline tanks, so you added extra load. You could go a long way and carry a big load with those things.

**Joshua Bell:** You sure could, what was it like going from a single engine to a dual engine?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:08:50] I'm sorry I missed you, start that again.

**Joshua Bell:** What was it like going from a single engine aircraft to a dual engine aircraft?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:08:59] Well it was like you wanted to pay the government. It was such a blessing. You know, the runways were made out of steel matting. I don't know if you ever seen that stuff. It's strips of really heavy gauged steel that have got holes poked through it and little interlocking ears on each side so they'd all lock together as you lay them down and hold together. They were for a place where you couldn't make a finished runway, which would be a concrete runway. They worked wonderfully well.

[01:09:59] But they're slippery, and in there of course it was more slippery because it was snow so often, packed snow. And if there wasn't any snow they'd just, the steel if it got wet was slipper as itself. And what was worse was the winds were so bad. They would be fast and turbulent, and different directions, and any time there could be clouds along with them right down to the ground. And the P-40 you had enough trouble with the narrow landing gear, the vertical tail had a little control. They didn't have enough control.

[01:10:59] It was blanked out by the fuselage when you went to do a three point landing. And that narrow gear was the difficult part, because it allowed it to get away in a ground loop easy. So the P-38-15 was just a wonderful machine. It was a good cruising plane. You didn't have torque like the P-40

---

single engine. The propellers on the engines of the P38 each turned in a different way. So they counteracted themselves as far as torque was concerned. It was very gentle to fly.

[01:11:59] And anyway we finally learned what this was all about. We were assigned the job of going over to the Japanese Kuril Islands. They were islands that went from the mainland islands up north up to the Kamchatka Peninsula of Russia. And they had some facilities on the northern Kuril Islands. And those PV bombers and our Army's B-25s and B-24s would try to bomb those islands. But the anti-aircraft was making it difficult when the weather was good and you could see. Of course they could see the airplanes too.

[01:12:59] And when you couldn't see you couldn't hit what you were trying to hit. So they figured out that we'll use these new modified P-38-15s, and we'll send them over. And have them blast the hell out of the anti-aircraft. And then our bombers will have an easier time, and then we're going to make a landing there. And so what that it doesn't have any real military value it'll have tremendous psychological value. The Japanese will see now on top of everything else they're going to be attacked from the north. And the USA will just march down those islands and reach their homeland, and we're going to be finished. So that's what I guess us four were picked for.

[01:14:06] They wanted to have someone who had a little more training time for one thing, and will get them in on this attack we're going to make. And we'll just see how they function. But of course it didn't happen because the war ended about the same day we were going to go on that attack.

**Joshua Bell:** Did you have mixed feelings about that?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:14:44] I'm sorry say--

**Joshua Bell:** [Talks over] Were you relieved?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:14:51] Not exactly, it was a very strange mixed emotion sort of thing. There was some relief that the hazards wouldn't be faced. But there was at least on my part there was a lot of frustration to not

---



be able to see if you could do what you were supposed to do. And here we'd gone in the service, and done the training routine, and we're supposed to you know, accomplish something. And we haven't anything to show for the efforts we made, so it was not frustration. And I don't know that they balanced or anything. They just both existed.

[01:15:51] The realization that somebody was going to go in the drink before a mission was accomplished if we continued on. But at the same token we couldn't prove anything, show that we'd accomplished anything, and that was the big disappointment. Of course we were young. I was young. I don't know what I was, 19 or something like that. And that's an age where you've got a lot of ambition to show off. And then you can't do it, you know.

**Joshua Bell:** So did you ever feel like you wanted to be assigned, looking back on it--

**Bruce Hubbard:** [Talks over] [01:16:55] You know I'm having trouble hearing you.

**Joshua Bell:** Oh okay let me try it again.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:16:58] Would you say that again please?

**Joshua Bell:** At the time did you feel like you wanted to be assigned somewhere else?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:17:10] No, no. Well, yes and no. That front didn't come first. There is where I really loused things up. We moved. We flew back and I led one flight back to Anchorage, and I could go down to the flight line and go up in a hangar at night. And they have a balcony floor at the front that is at the runway side over the hangar doors, a place where offices were.

[01:18:12] And I'd go up in the office and sit and go over the scenario in my head thousands of times trying to decide whether to go back home and go back to the U and work to get a degree, or accommodate the people that were asking me to stay. And I thought that was rather flattering and I sure

---

liked to fly. You know, the only thing is that I wouldn't be getting a degree. Well it turns out that people in the military can continue getting an education, and the military tries to accommodate that and encourages that.

[01:19:13] And I didn't know that, and I thought well the only thing you'd do is get bored and end up being an alcoholic. So I made a pretty quick judgment there, and I didn't want to do that. And then I finally figured out that what my problem was that I was homesick. You know, and then that was when the problem of being in the military off some place you can't show anyone you really know like people in your family or other friends what you do.

You know, you can't show them. They can't see your airplane. They don't know what a P-40 is or a P38 or what it can do or anything like it. [01:20:16] They can't see you operate it. No one that you know knows exactly what you do. You could be driving a garbage truck as far as that's concerned. So there is some kind of a vacuum there that's not so good. But I had no college degree, which would have helped me in the military, and I didn't realize the possibility of getting one while I was in the service. And without the college degree you were heading for a tough life. Well what happened I didn't get a college degree. I went back to school and I couldn't study.

[01:21:13] I couldn't concentrate. I couldn't. And I took courses over that I had taken already and I didn't do as well. What I accomplished in the service is getting over some serious shyness and that was a betterment. But I didn't accomplish much else except having this fascination for an airplane and flying an airplane, controlling that and all the things that go along with it, the navigation and so forth.

[01:22:10] And so there wasn't anything of interest other than the actual flying. But I finally decided that the proper stepping stone includes a college degree. So anyway I chose to go back to school, and I really seriously botched it. I didn't think that that sort of thing could happen. I did fairly well as a student before, particularly in courses that I liked math courses and so forth. Not good that I wanted to be an engineer and they said you need to take a foreign language, and for an engineer to me German is the best. So I

---

took two years of German and got a straight D, which really loused up my grade point average.

[01:23:13] So all my calculations were going bad. But anyway then I had left school and took some tests that the Veteran's Administration and the schools like UW were jointly giving to people like me. And there were a lot of people like me not knowing what they really wanted to do. And they ended up saying that I should be a teacher. I says, "Well how long does it take to get a teacher?" "Well to be a teacher and get a ranking in that field that would pay good enough you'd need about seven years."

[01:24:09] And I said, "I wouldn't be able to last that long." And I just showed that I wasn't worth the food as a student anyway for some reason. I was before, not real good, but good enough to kind of coattail kids that were good. And so anyway I was then taking this test to find out what I wanted to be, and they finally you know, they take several days to give the test and some weeks to grade it and tell you what you should be. And the teacher was the answer and that wouldn't work because of all the schooling I'd have to take to get in a good position in that field.

[01:25:12] Well anyway, they said, "Well, you could be a salesman. You couldn't be an aggressive type. You're an introvert not an extrovert. You have to be something that was kind of mild. You know, you couldn't make people buy what you're selling." And I understood that, "That's true. But I don't know what it would be." "Well how about insurance?" "What?" So I was working for an outfit that made reports on people that were applicants for insurance. Reports on people who were applicants for government job like making the Hanford Works, and reports on various applicants for various insurances.

[01:26:22] And you'd go out and interview neighbors and employers or different people, and gather this information that was already marked out on forms. And you'd just fill in information, and where you got it and so forth. And that was kind of interesting, and I did that. But it was also boring, but when I said to my boss what I was doing he said he happened to know one

---

of the better insurance companies in the general [agent] fort here in town.

[01:27:12] And he would help me get on with them. It'd have to be a trainee, and the government would pay you money while you were learning. So I did that, and it was life insurance for a big company. And I was with another guy who was a little bit older than me and used to go out at night and have these interviews. And this other guy would go out and come back with an application, then I'd come back with a card with their name, and address, and age, and the date, and what they were interested in insurance. And they said they would call me after they'd thought it over and were ready.

[01:28:09] So I have a lot of people that were then in the category of waiting until they were ready, and this other guy had an application. So I didn't look too good, but I had the feeling that people who bought from me would know what they were buying. And that they would keep it, and they would pursue it and maybe more realizing the value. But it takes some stick-to-it-ive-ness to keep something like that.

**Joshua Bell:** Oh it sure does.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:28:57] And anyway my boss didn't care much for me. I couldn't learn to give the spiels that they had created. They had made these little talks up, and you were supposed to learn them. Know them by heart and you could give them to the person, and they was supposed to had been time tested and it was the right thing to do. I couldn't. I just simply could not. It was phony stuff.

**Joshua Bell:** The hard sell.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:29:37] Beg your pardon.

**Joshua Bell:** The hard sell.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:29:40] Yeah, well I couldn't do that. Anyway the people that I talked to said, "You're the first insurance person where I understood what insurance was about."

---

**Joshua Bell:** That must have made you feel pretty good.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:29:55] Yeah, and later on after a few years I finally got kicked out, and I met a young man who worked in the office who knew all about the argument between me and the general agent and what was going on in that regard. And the philosophies about the type of selling and one thing or another, and he said, "That Dick," that was the other trainee who was an intelligent mature man. He'd been a ship's captain. And none of his policies that he sold ever went beyond the first year. And none of the policies that I sold ever dropped.

[01:30:55] So I knew my philosophy was correct that you can't bullshit people. You know, they've got to know what they're doing when it comes to money particularly to continue to do it and be happy about it. And they have to be happy about it to continue to do it, so I was right. And the agent didn't know that and of course I don't know if he ever did understand that. I never talked to him anymore. So anyway I ended up a person without a college degree, and when you're young you can get over deficiencies or handle them, or get better response from others because of them.

[01:32:08] When you're young, but that is changing all the time as you age. That people are less forgiving, less compassionate in the business world of employment. And it just doesn't work. That without a college degree as you get you know, 40 on up. And even up to 40 you're damn lucky that someone will give you a break.

[01:32:55] So I never made any money. You know, I was just an employee. I done different things. Yeah, and I never made anyone dissatisfied with my efforts. But I never got to a position where I made any money. I did invent something and got a patent on it, but I never got any money to develop it, to bring it to market. That costs money.

**Joshua Bell:** Oh yes it does, what did you get your patent on?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:33:43] On a way to make a sealed insulated window glass that can take the place of the single pane glass in a wooden sash

---

window without changing the wood sash at all. Just cleaning it up so.

**Joshua Bell:** Oh wow.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:34:10] Yeah, I've put some of that glass in windows in my house. I've hauled it around to all kinds of contractors, and all kinds of glass places, all sorts of historical preservation activities. And it's simple. It's so simple it's almost laughable, but no one looks at I like I do. And I have a connection with a person that was a salesman for a big glass company that's since gone out of our town. I guess there wasn't enough business for all the glass companies.

[01:35:10] But anyway I thought that the little glass shops, people that sold you know, replace your broken window glass would take this up as another line of business and be enthusiastic about it. It's easy to learn to do. It's simple. And there are so many buildings that could use this. You know, there is not as many as there used to be, but there are a lot in this country anyway. And I understand talking to other people that all through the United States even in the southern states they like insulated glass cause it helps keep them cool.

**Joshua Bell:** That's right.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:35:59] So I had this, but I can't bring it to market because right now I'm and for the last many years I have so little money coming in that it doesn't cover a mortgage payment and living expenses. And I get money from, I and my wife, get money from two of our four daughters to keep us afloat. And I can't take their money and go advertise my glass. So I've been looking for someone to do that. I found at the beginning all I had to do is walk into a glass shop, show them this, would you like to try this as another part of your business, another line?

[01:37:02] Well I've done that many times, and they're reluctant. Like they see something about it or feel something about it that I don't that's negative. And at the same time there is a lot of people who are not exactly in the business of going out and installing glass will say how clever it is, how wonderful it is. They join me in not understanding why someone would not

---

use it as a line of business. So I don't know. I'm really puzzled, and nothing I can do about it I guess.

**Joshua Bell:** Well if I hear of any I'll ask around.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:38:02] I'm sorry I didn't hear you.

**Joshua Bell:** I said, I'll ask around and see what I can find out.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:38:09] Well yeah, how about you want to go into business? It's better than nothing else, sell it to glass shops. Have you ever, do you have a computer?

**Joshua Bell:** I do.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:38:35] Have you ever brought up on your computer the patent and trademark office of the US Government.

**Joshua Bell:** I can't say that I have.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:38:51] If you bring that up I'm looking. You can put in my patent number and see what it is, and I'll give you the number if you want to do that.

**Joshua Bell:** Sure I'll check it out.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:39:06] I would be interested in what you'd think. What's my patent number? Here is my patent number. It's 5, 950, 398.

**Joshua Bell:** Three, nine, eight.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:39:31] And that's it, 5,590,398, and it's called Pass By Glass. And the reason it's called Pass By is that you need some kind of a name to refer them to, and that's how it's installed. It's one piece of glass that's the size of the original glass you take out of the window. The spacer and the second piece of glass, which happens to be on the inside are sized to pass by the inside edge of the wood frame.

---

[01:40:34] So that inside glass and the spacer passes by the inside edge. So I call it Pass By Glass.

**Joshua Bell:** There you go.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:40:53] And the exterior pane then rests right on the glazing, in the glazing rabbit that the original glass rested in. And the rest of that assembly is inside. The second, the spacer and then the second piece of glass are fastened to the inside space of the first piece that's the original size. And the other part passes in, and then insulated glass is put together with this space, but with black gunk that's a fastener. It's an adhesive and a water sealant, and you don't like to see black. So my very first one I'm looking at now many years ago I, I put a masking tape on the inside of that black edge that shows on the inside of the glass.

[01:42:05] And then I painted it, so paint covers the black. And then I went around on the outside surface I did the same thing. So I painted it, and it's covered. You don't see any black. The first glass shop I went to, to tell this stuff to. I said what I had done, and I'm acting in a very open way all the time because I know there is a lot that I need to know. And I would hope people might tell me that, that's how I go along. So I'm open to any suggestions, so I'm telling that. And this guy said, "No glass person is going to mask off some glass and paint it. They just won't do that." And he says, "Here is what we do," and he shows me a whole bunch of plastic pieces that you glue on to cover things up with.

[01:43:10] And you know, I felt well that's fine but I'm not going to do that. And so what I did was design a little molding. It's a quarter inch thick. It's 11/16ths wide, and on the face of it I did a couple of cuts so there is actually three levels of wood showing. It makes it kind of a nice design. You paint it and it looks like it's from downtown.

**Joshua Bell:** There you go.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:43:53] And it covers the black.

---



**Joshua Bell:** How about that.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:43:58] And I glue it on with poly-seam seal, which I've learned to use. And then this wood I use is yellow cedar, it comes from Alaska. And it's supposed to be just excellent for exterior work. And all you have to do is cut the ends of it at a 45 degree angle, and put it all around the edge of both the inside and outside. It covers the black stuff and makes a little pattern that makes it a little more decorative. And you'd pre-drill it with a little small drill on a, oh gosh I can't say words anymore.

[01:44:58] What's this little electric tool that's, a Dremel tool, they have an extension so it's flexible and it's small around. So you can get down close to the glass so you can make this shallow cut through this wood molding piece. And you pre-drill it, and then put 5/8ths inch long little brads made of stainless steel. I poke them in the holes. Set them down in, cover the hole that shows over the head with a little plastic wood. When it dries I sand it and then I paint the whole thing. It looks good. It looks so good I was sold. So anyway, so I'm completely frustrated because I can't find out, I can't bring it to market.

[01:46:05] I can't know whether it really is marketable or it's just too late for something like this. But I find that I dislike vinyl windows terribly. In the first place the frame is just thin piece of vinyl like material. It has no insulating value as opposed to the one and three eighths thick Douglas fir wood sash. So anyway I'm sorry I'm--

**Joshua Bell:** [Talks over] It sounds like you're very proud of it.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:46:53] beg your pardon?

**Joshua Bell:** It sounds like you're very proud of it.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:46:57] Well I think it has value is what I think except I can't prove it.

**Joshua Bell:** What are you most, while we're on the subject of taking pride

in something, what are you most proud of from your time in the service?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:47:20] What I'm most proud of what?

**Joshua Bell:** From your time in the service, from your time in the Army Air Force?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:47:28] Oh...well I guess I'm kind of proud of anytime someone gives me a compliment or show some trust in me. I tell you about this macho guy that was this tough instructor that, but was really good. And when he would say something that was complimenting I would be proud of it. I did things that were kind of odd that caused positive comment.

[01:48:30] This instructor was really tough and he had that reputation amongst other instructors in one thing or another. When I went to get a check ride the check instructor said, he says, "Yeah," he says, "I don't know what do with you. If you're getting along with so and so there is nothing that I need to check." But he says, "Let's go over here where there is some smoke in the distance," something was burning. "Let's go over and check on this smoke." So we did that, and then coming back he pulled a engine out routine. And I looked around, and I finally found what made him do it there, there was a nice big field of some kind of grain.

[01:49:32] And so I went through all the things where you have to touch or move the stuff like the throttle, mixer control or one thing or another like you would do if it were a real emergency to get it running again. And I went through all that, and I was going down. And I lowered the flaps, and prepared to land. And I did, I landed and ran through this grain field and finally stopped, and it was really quite quiet, the engine not running in this field. And he said something, said, "Boy," he says, "that was a pretty grain field." He says, "But what made you land?" I says, "Well this was simulating an emergency landing wasn't it?"

[01:50:29] "Yes." "Well my instructor said to not move the throttle until he said so." And of course this guy didn't say so, he didn't know he had to for one thing. I didn't brief him. I didn't think to. I was too worried about finding a place to land. So anyway he says, "Go back in your tracks." And I said, "I

know that, which I did.” And I took off through them again, but anyway that was kind of funny and fun and interesting. I can't think of them all. There were several of them, and at the overseas training field the one that was held over as instructor I was coming in on a noontime flight.

[01:51:35] And the skies were pretty crowded, so as the leader of the flight you follow the last guy of the flight ahead of you that are landing. And you take the opposite side of the runway, so if you end up passing him you don't run into him. And anyway, I was landing a three point instead of a wheel landing because it's a slower landing. And I didn't want to pass that guy, not that that isn't okay, it just has a diminishment of talent I guess in running past.

[01:52:28] That's not as neat and clean and appropriate a way, so I wanted to not run by this guy. So I stuck to a wheel landing approach where you put the plane in the landing position, so when it stalls finally it drops on to the surface on all three wheels. Well the first time I did that and the plane was cocked to the right because there was a crosswind from the right that was kind of a busy breeze. And I was on the left-hand side of the runway and didn't want to get blown off the runway, so I had pretty good set to the wind. Well the left wing stalled, the right wing went up so it was more of a wind vein.

**Joshua Bell:** Oh no.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:53:34] Yeah, and it blew me more towards the end of the runway. And I thought it was going to stall then, and I straightened out and then it didn't stall. It still flew. So then I had to turn it into the wind again, and I did that three times. And the third time I turned it into the wind and I got blown right over the edge of the runway. And the left wing went down. The right wing went up again. I looked down the left wing and it was going to rake into the earth. It's a prepared of material of some kind they put at the edge of the runway, and it was going to dig into that stuff and I was going to cartwheel into the earth, which was soft lumpy earth with sage brush bunches all over it.

[01:54:44] And the only thing I could do to keep that from happening was turn the plane to about 45 degrees off the runway and give it full power. And I took off through the sagebrush, and the powdery dirt blowing all that dirt back over the runway and everybody can see it for miles. Well the--

**Joshua Bell:** [Talks over] How'd you get her down?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:55:18] Well I had to get it up first, and the guy in the tower was yelling for me to, "Put the nose now. Put the nose down." Well at a training fields like that they have a runway control, a guy in a jeep with a radio on your frequency and he's monitoring the landings. And he finally says to the guy in the tower to, "Shut up, he's got enough trouble without answering you." And so then the tower shut up, and finally I got it going. And it was easier on the bumps. And finally I got it up off the ground, and a barbed wire fence came up and I got it up over the barbed wire fence. As if the fence would have had anything to do with a 9,000 pound airplane anyway.

[01:56:20] It shows how strange us humans are. But anyway, I got it up and I came around, and I landed. The commanding officer who is a bird colonel, and he had said about two weeks before that, "This field has the most accidents and damaged training planes of any training field in the United States. And if we have another one I'm going to close the field." Well close the field means that people couldn't, that are stationed there couldn't I've off the field. And all the instructors except us four were returned combat men, and they would have been very angry with someone who caused the closing of the field.

[01:57:20] And I didn't want to be that guy. That would have been very bad, so I had to save the cartwheeling. Besides I didn't want to be in the plane when it's upside down in that lose dirt, and my face would be in the dirt. It would be bad. So anyway I taxied to where I was supposed to park, and about the time I got there the runway control chief was there. And the sedan with the flags on the front fenders belonging to the commanding officer of the field was there. And those two were talking and looking at the rounded underside of that left wing. And I was getting thoughts in my head, and I

pulled out the Form 41 I think they called it, and that's where you log in the flights.

[01:58:27] You know, you put the time down and all that stuff and who you are. Because I remembered having landing problems with the plane, and sure enough about two weeks back there was the writing by me saying that the left wing stalls before the right wing. And that's what it did, and that's what added to the problem. If the left wing hadn't stalled first it wouldn't be so bad. You could have controlled it better. But it did, so anyway they motioned for me to come. They wanted me to see what I had caused. Well what I had caused was three rivets had their paint scraped off by that sandy material on the side of the runway.

[01:59:27] And I said, "Well I was sitting up there trying to remember, and I did, and I finally found where I'd flown this plane before. And I wrote it up as a left wing failing. That is not flying anymore as well as the right wing." It stalled first. And with that crosswind coming from the right it really kind of made it difficult. Now I didn't say that, that if I had thought to at the very beginning and made a wheel landing instead of a stalled three wheeled landing I'd have been better off.

[02:00:26] I just forgot that part. So anyway the commanding officer said to a sergeant who had come, "Take this damn thing out and burn it." So that was okay with me, and that was all that was ever said about it. They didn't close the field. It wasn't enough damage. It was just the paint removed from the three rivets. And I had to admit that I was pretty proud of myself. I don't know who has ever made a overland take off in a P-40 without benefit of a runway. Except me, and so that's sort of getting away with something I guess.

[02:01:23] And I was lucky, but there were different times where things occurred that made it more interesting.

**Joshua Bell:** Well, I've had you on the phone for right around about two hours now.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [02:01:45] That's too much.

**Joshua Bell:** Do you want to, I'd be happy, I would love to hear the other stories that you've got. Do you want to schedule a time next week?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [02:01:59] Wait, you mean you want to hear more of this stuff?

**Joshua Bell:** Oh yes.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [02:02:05] What in the world are you going to do with it?

**Joshua Bell:** We're going to save it.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [02:02:13] Really? Well it's too bad you can't hear from the guy whose P-40 engine quit on him out away from the island. And he was near a little elevated island that was just a you know, a big sized rock sticking out of the water called Bull Dear Island. And he landed dead stick landing a P-40 on that island, and saved himself from going in the drink.

**Joshua Bell:** Wow.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [02:02:58] Amazing dead stick on a P-40, which isn't all that--

**Joshua Bell:** That's a bit of a task.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [02:03:08] --powerful. So that would be something to hear. Well anyway yeah I would be happy to if I can remember all the things.

**Joshua Bell:** Let's see, how about is next Wednesday available?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [02:03:35] Let me get the calendar.

**Joshua Bell:** Sure.

[End of recorded material 02:03:43]

\*\*\*\*\*

[Start of recorded material]

**Joshua Bell:** The time we spoke you talked about a guy who did a dead stick landing with a P-40 out on one of the little islands.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:00:11] Oh yeah, out on Bull Dear Island. Yeah, yeah that's pretty much completed story. He just was raised several notches in esteem by his fellow flyers to make that dead stick landing on that little spot of ground. He had some luck too, but that's okay. You have so many difficulties sometimes that a little luck is needed and not a take away? He still has the respect and esteem of his colleagues. But anyway, I said something about basic training I guess it was wasn't it.

[00:01:19] And I was talking about my instructor, and then I got side tracked in telling you about the different fields in the primary, and the basic, and the advanced categories. And I didn't talk about the primary except to mention the plane. There is a Fairchild PT-19 tandem two seat open cockpit. Yeah and you started it by somebody alongside the engine on the outside of the plane cranking away an inertial starter that is a weighted wheel that you get to going.

[00:02:19] And then when you get it going so far you have the guy quick cranking, and you engage that wheel to the engine. And turns it over until it catches, meaning it starts the cylinders or the spark plugs start firing, and it catches and it starts running by itself. And then you advance from that plane to the basic, oh pardon me, that primary that you're in is civilian run. It's a contract with civilians. And it'll be in little fields by little towns and just any kind of a guy that can fly.

[00:03:15] And they take you up and explain the maneuvers and how to do it. And get you to do some flying on your own, and takeoffs and landings, and then there comes the day you stop the plane by the operations shack. And the instructor gets out, and waves you goodbye and you go off on your own. And that's soloing, and you fly all by yourself the first time. And then

by gosh you are the biggest thing on earth.

**Joshua Bell:** How did you feel on your first solo?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:04:06] I did fine. I felt very good. I was so tickled to be able to do that, and I did a good job. Those planes, I digress a little bit, are a fabric over a skeleton, a metal framework, just like all the planes back in the beginning were. But the wing is a little different. The center section of the wing of the lower part, well the whole part actually of just the center portion of the what really is two wings butting against each other is made of plywood. And the landing gear comes out of the bottom of that center section.

[00:05:09] And that's the part of the plane that takes the biggest beating. Because until you're skilled you often will just drop a plane in from a couple of feet or more. And that's pretty hard on the plywood center section, so there was a lot of repair going on these primary training fields if that's the plane that they were using. And that was the latest purchase. The planes before that and the ones they still were using were what they call Stearman. And they were also a Boeing Cadet, and they were two wing planes and very maneuverable. But I thought I was lucky to get in these Fairchild PT-19s that was a low wing plane.

[00:06:10] And it was fun. It felt good. I ended up co-owning one with a guy after the war was over, but I never had enough money to fly very much. But I did a little bit, and it was fun even on little you know, kind of small powered 175 horsepower. You know, and so anyway and then the next plane, the basic, was a kind of a, well it was a fixed landing gear, didn't retract. It was a two-speed propeller. You took off at one speed and then pulled the lever back and it went to the speed you used for the rest of the flight. And it had a canopy on it so you were kind of out of the weather more so than the PT-19.

[00:07:13] It was a little more horsepower, about 450, and to the student it was a big plane. It was impressive. Some would be a little bit scared of it and so forth, but it was a tough durable training plane. And so you learned a



little more in the way of maneuvers, you know, like doing loops and stuff like that. And anyway what I was trying to get to in all of this is get to this basic where mine, and the instructors were military. It was no longer civilian operated and trained trainers. And I had a, I don't know, I think I don't remember now I think he was a captain.

[00:08:14] And he was kind of a head of a section or something in there. He was up in rank amongst the instructors. And he had a great personality, impressed. He was nice looking and he really knew what eh was doing. And he was smart, he used all kinds of techniques to try to get you to learn something.

**Joshua Bell:** Like what?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:08:45] Well, one time he was trying to teach me to do lazy 8s right and I wasn't doing it right. And pretty soon the stick was going from side to side and beating the heck out of my knees. And I look up in the mirror that looks back, and I see him looking in the mirror where he's watching my face to see how I take that. And I decided well that wasn't very nice. It made me kind of mad. And he said something about my doing these things sloppily or slowly or both things. And it made me mad, and I grabbed that stick and I said to myself, "He's worse off in the backseat than me in the front seat. So I'll give him a ride."

[00:09:47] And I really racked that thing around and it make that as tight as turns as I could. You go up and down and back and forth in it, and it's just a basic maneuver to get the feel of what you can do with a plane. But anyway, he satisfied himself. He got me to do what he wanted me to do. And I and all of his other five instructors, and - pardon me - students were scared of him. He was a man that you really were afraid of; you know you did what he said and no fooling around. But I started to catch on to him.

[00:10:47] For instance I went and he was teaching me night flying. And in a field like that you have to have, you divide the ground around with a field that's out being in the middle of a big square. And then you cut it into four sections, and then you divided those four sections vertically you know, at

1,000 feet, 2,000 feet. So you could put several planes up in the air and have them practicing maneuvers at nighttime to get used to flying at night. And anyway when my turn came for this I didn't know it was coming. But anyway we were all practicing doing something and he wanted to be land. And I landed and I went to pull the throttle off and he was holding it from, in the back seat is where he was holding it.

[00:11:53] And he wouldn't let me move it, and then he explained you're going to go solo. And he climbed out of his seat and put up the seatbelt together and closed the canopy and come forward and stuck his head in behind the windshield to protect himself from the propeller blast to talk to me. And at the same time he put his right arm around my shoulders, and that was an unusual friendly maneuver. I thought, oh what? And so he talked to me and then said what he wanted to say, and then he says, "Have a good ride, son."

[00:12:49] And he got down off the wing. I would never have thought that that tough guy would wish someone a good ride or put his arm around their shoulder. That gave away his secret. He was really a soft hearted person who really wanted to teach people something.

**Joshua Bell:** Did you have a good ride?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:13:22] I had a good ride. I felt very good. And anyway also at one time I finally got the courage to squeal on a plane that got in front of me in the landing pattern. You know, it's a whole bunch of planes coming in the field at the same time makes for a problem. So there is a first to downwind approach, and it fills up into a line that could be a couple miles long. And it's a great sin to cut in front of someone in that line. And the reason is that the line gets going slow, and too slow, and it's dangerously slow, and to cut in front of someone that someone has to slow down even more then to keep from running into you.

[00:14:28] And so you could make a guy stall and spin out. When you're only 500 feet in the air you don't have enough time to recover, and so that's a bad thing. Well the plane that did that to me I could see the number. And

when it was going crosswise in front of me I could see silhouetted there were two people in it. And that means that it had an instructor in it, and so it should of all planes not do that. So I told my instructor, cause I didn't know who it was. I just knew the number of the plane, and I told him. Boy he left the room lickety-split, and he came back about ten minutes later. And then, "That son of a B will never do that again."

[00:15:27] So I figured he was a pretty good guy and not one that you had to be afraid of so. And anyway in that basic you did different things on top of what you did in primary as far as maneuvers. And one of them was the emergency landing, you'd go out and the instructors would pull the throttle back so the engine is just idling. And then you got to look for a landing place. And you pick it out and you go through the checking of instruments first you know, and then while you're feeling them and looking at them you're also looking around outside. You pick out a place you think you're going to land, and you tell the instructor, and you head for it. And one thing this instructor said was, "You don't push the throttle forward to take off until I tell you."

[00:16:34] And so he let's you get right down just above the ground, and then he'll let you push the throttle in and go. Which turned out kind of strange one day when I was given a check ride. And this guy that was giving me a check ride said he didn't know the purpose of checking me if I'm so-and-so's student. Meaning that the instructor would get his student to pass the check ride easy, so why should he check? But anyway he had to do that, and so there was smoke some place. And he wanted to go off and see that and we did that, and then we did some maneuvers.

[00:17:27] And then finally he pulled the throttle and the emergency landing, and I went through the motions. You touch and move things that are touch moveable you know, and to check if you can't get it started again when it's supposedly stopped. So anyway, you'd do that and the same time you'd look for a field. And I looked and I found a nice field. It was somebody's wheat field, and it was good field and plenty of room. The only thing is you can't see down what's right on the ground. The wheat covers it. So if there is big rocks there you know, you can't see them and so you hit them. But

anyway I went down and I've got down to just above the grass, and I'm saying, "Well why isn't he telling me to go, you know?"

[00:18:31] And he didn't, and so I landed it. And here I made these two furrows in this guy's wheat field, and I got finally to a stop. And so I turned around and was going to head back, and the check rider said, "How come you landed?" "Well we're practicing an emergency landing." "Yeah." "Well my instructor said to not take off until he gives me permission, and I didn't get permission." So the guy had a good sense of humor, and he laughed and laughed and laughed. He says, "Well let's get out of here before the farmer comes with a shotgun.

[00:19:28] And that's what we did. So there are lots of interesting things happened, and then of course they go on to basic and the plane is an AT-6.

**Joshua Bell:** Basic or advanced?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:19:47] Beg your pardon?

**Joshua Bell:** Basic or advanced?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:19:51] That's advanced, and the AT is an advanced trainer, and the six is the number in a row of the development of that plane, that kind.

**Joshua Bell:** Was that one called The Texan?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:20:12] Yes, and the Navy calls it an SNJ, and it's a wonderful plane. Of course the United States used an awful lot of them for training. We had up on Attu Island even, and I was almost the only one that was flew it. I was a taxi cab driver. I'd fly people over to a nearby island called Shemya that actually got used by commercial airlines when people started to fly to Japan and so forth. It was a flat field. The highest point was 500 feet above the water, a big rock at the west end of the runway.

[00:21:12] But anyway I flew that AT-6 over there often, and then sometimes we'd need to take pictures of maneuvers or actions with the P-38.

Particularly the dropping external gas tanks to be sure that they didn't, when they're empty they're light you know, would float up and hit the horizontal tale. You know, we got rid of the old wives tale of empty gas tanks breaking that horizontal tale. It didn't happen. So anyway that AT-6 is a great plane.

[00:22:10] And other countries like Brazil and I think was one, and I don't know how many used it as their first line fighter. It fired a 30-caliber machine gun, so anyway. And that's when they started aerial gunnery with after you had graduated from advanced training you went you got a little leave. And then you went back to aerial gunnery with that, but anyway.

**Joshua Bell:** Oh, oh where did you spend your leave?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:22:53] I came home. I got bold and I ended up meeting a young guy just graduated from flying in the Navy flying school in Florida, meeting him somewhere, and I don't know where. It was in Texas and it was somewhere in, oh shoot. I can't remember now. Anyway we were going to take a plane and we got tickets to the plane. But the plane ended up stopping in what's the north city in Texas that's in the panhandle?

[00:23:53] Well whatever it is anyway, the plane stopped there and didn't go because it was going from there to California and then to Washington. And the weather in California wouldn't allow it to fly. And so it stopped and they couldn't tell us where we were going to go. So this Navy guy and I went to a place that used to have them around at that time where somebody started up a place for people to meet. And if you had a car and you were driving somewhere you'd go to a place like this and say is there anyone you know, wanting to go there? And then you'd share expenses, and so we found such a place and there was a woman waiting and ready to go to meet her husband who is going overseas.

[00:24:52] And he was in an Army field over in Eastern Washington, and I can't, I'm so punchy I can't say the name of the place. But anyway this woman agreed to take so much money from each of us, and we agreed to pay her so to buy the gas. And she drove a turn, and that was the last she ever drove was that one. And this guy and I drive that car all the way, and

got to, oh I'm sorry I can't say the town over in Eastern Washington. Anyway we got near the Army place and there was an all night cafe where truckers stopped. And I got out there, and well both the Navy guy and I got out there.

[00:25:54] But I went in the cafe looking for somebody going to Seattle and found somebody. Well he didn't go all the way to Seattle, but he stopped in like a Yakima right in front of the bus station so the bus couldn't go out. And the bus was heading to Seattle, and I think I ended up boarding the bus and went. But anyway the where was I before that? I was at a basic training, and then advanced training. And your--

**Joshua Bell:** You were telling me about, we started with the break between basic and advanced, and you were going to tell me a bit more about how you did aerial gunnery training.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:26:57] Oh, oh yeah well I went back to advanced. Advanced for me was Eagle Pass, Texas. And so after I had you know, graduated and came home on that little, I had a 11 day delay in route from Eagle Pass, Texas to Eagle Pass, Texas. And so when I got there it was for this gunnery school, and we did it from an auxiliary field, a smaller field a little distance away from the main field at Eagle Pass. And we had to take care of our own guns. We had to load them and all that sort of stuff.

[00:27:57] And they had a small bomber like a B-26 as a tow plane, and they'd tow a target. And the targets would be I don't know, 20 feet long and about four feet high. And they would be made of fabric covered wire, white. And your bullets would be painted. They'd dip the points in paint, so that each guy flying would have a specific color. And so when you got through and you chalked your ammunition up they would come over the field with that target towing plane and drop the target.

[00:29:04] And they would count the numbers of each color, and you would have a score. And that was part of your records. I wasn't real good on it, but a lot of people weren't. It's a difficult thing to time your dive in a turning dive on this tow target and lead it enough so the bullets hit it, and not run

into it, and not get such a shallow angle that you're shooting ammunition at the plane that's towing the targets.

[00:30:03] So it's a good practice and it's a thing you have to do to learn about aerial gunnery, and in terms of like dog fighting for fighter planes.

**Joshua Bell:** What do you remember about the first time you did that? What do you remember about the first time you went up and got to open fire?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:30:29] Oh, oh well I remember I didn't do very well. I didn't hit it very many times, and I was disappointed in that. But I was impressed with the various things you got to time all at the same time. There is a lot going on, and you could really get in trouble if you didn't take care of all the duties and ended up wrapped up in that tow target or shooting the towing plane. It was asking quite a bit, and you'd get more accustomed to it. It makes a big difference, but the first time was pretty impressive. It was no easy task.

[00:31:31] I did better at bombing, at low level what they call skip bombing. You hit in front of the target and bounce the bomb into it, and that was fun for me, and I did pretty good at that. But yeah--

**Joshua Bell:** What do you remember? Oh I'm sorry go ahead.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:32:00] I'm sorry I didn't hear that.

**Joshua Bell:** Oh, what do you remember? What do you remember thinking about the guys who flew the tow plane?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:32:08] Oh well I remember having great empathy for his situation. I wouldn't want to do that. The people that were picked out to do that must have done something bad at some time or another, and some superior officer was getting back at them by assigning them that duty. I've ridden with those guys just to see what its like. And it can get kind of hairy sometimes when the bullets come close and the plane does too. And I've seen where I went to overseas training at Colorado Springs a P-40 fighter

plane making a simulated pass at a bomber.

[00:33:17] And you're in a downward dive, and as you get close to the plane you start getting out of its track. You shot it up and you wanted to get away from there. And that's what this plane was doing, but he wasn't getting away from the other plane's track fast enough. And he was in a 90 degree bank, and so one wing was up in the air. And he hit his one wing against the trailing edge of the bomber's wing, and he lost his wing. And he was with an instructor, there was two people in that P-40.

[00:34:10] I don't know how that happened. No that couldn't have been, that couldn't have been. That wasn't the one. Anyway, whoever it was lost the wing and it slumped kind of funny. And I was standing there silently saying bail out, bail out, bail out you know. And he never did bail out. He just crashed, so there are lots of techniques to things that need to be learned. And after a while you get so you do them naturally, and start trying to accomplish in the way of shooting down and without getting killed yourself, so.

**Joshua Bell:** That must have been a sobering thing to see happen.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:35:08] Yeah, yeah. That thing with that P-40 losing its wing was a first time I had seen an accident. You know, a lot of them had happened at fields where I was, but I never had seen them. You just hear about them and so forth, so that was kind of bad. But anyway it teaches you a lesson and you know, you got to be on your toes about these things. And if something you don't understand you better ask questions and get it clear in your head. So that was it. And anyway those three training files you go through. [00:36:08] And then you go to the, what I is Colorado Springs, overseas training. And we had P-40s there. And so I thought I was going to go to the South Pacific. Our whole class was going to go to the South Pacific.

**Joshua Bell:** Is that where you wanted to go?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:36:32] Yeah, because from there they were giving people training in P-51s. And I wanted to fly that P-51. And so it was very strange when for of us were given orders to report to where we were. And



**Bruce Hubbard**  
February 12, 2014 & March 13, 2014

**Aleutian World War II**  
**Oral History Project**

we were assigned instructor duty, and so we four were made instructors. And we weren't giving any training we were just giving orders. And so you'd take a flight up to go flying and practice maneuvers, and practice flying formation, and one thing another.

[00:37:37] And one was the brand new class and one was a class that was going on their second half of their stay there. And it became pretty clear pretty early that the brand new class was better than the guys who'd stayed half their stay already. They were kind of cocky and not as sharp as they thought they were. And anyway, I never experienced that before. It was pretty good that the younger newer guys were very eager. They were very sharp, and we usually had the best looking... **Audio Cut**

**March 13, 2014**  
**Seattle, Washington**

Interviewed by Joshua Bell, Volunteer Oral Historian and Researcher, National Park Service

*This interview is part of the Aleutian World War II National Historic Area Oral History Project. The interview with Donald Brydon was recorded with his permission on a digital recorder. Copies of the audio file are preserved in mp3, wav and wma formats and are on file at the offices of the National Park Service in Anchorage, Alaska.*

*The transcript has been lightly edited.*

-----  
[Start of recorded material 00:00:00]

**Joshua Bell:** Today is March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2014. I spoke yesterday with Mr. Bruce Hubbard, Aleutian World War II veteran. And we're here again today to talk more about his wartime experience. Yesterday you mentioned that you were an instructor for a while.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:00:23] Yes.

**Joshua Bell:** What was it like to have that responsibility?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:00:30] Oh, I really enjoyed it, and was so strange to me to be enjoying it. But I was, and I got along fine with people that were being instructed. We had un-pleasantries, and nothing other than that in our relationship, and so I gained it by, I thought, you know, having to speak to the things we did and how we do them and maybe understand them better myself. So yeah, instructing was fine. I took a course, I don't know what you'd call it.

[00:01:33] It was put out by University of Washington along with the Veteran's Administration representing the Federal government after I came home from service. And this was a test that they had purchased from some university back east to help a person find out what they're suited for and what they like to do. So you can point yourself in some direction that has more likelihood of success. And anyway I took that test, and it took them a couple weeks or so to grade it, and then you will meet with someone who interprets it for you.

[00:02:32] And they said what I needed to do was to be a teacher. Now that's really strange I thought, you know. And this was because I had come back, when I went in the service I went out of the university. I was a freshman in the engineering college, and when I came back I went back to that figuring I'd just start all over. And I did terrible. I couldn't study and I couldn't concentrate and I did terrible.

**Joshua Bell:** Why do you think that was?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:03:15] Well, my reaction to schooling was really kind of childish. You know, I seemed to resent everything. It didn't make sense. It was foolish. I didn't enjoy it. I didn't want to join in the other students in keeping up a conversation about it. And this was one class was the worst in that respect, and it was an English class. And the English, particularly English class that dealt with poetry. And the other people, mostly younger than myself then, would say, oh I think the author was trying to say this and

they'd blab on about what they thought the author was trying to say. Well you know, you can say anything you want to say about what you think.

[00:04:18] That can't be challenged, but you need to join in by saying something and I couldn't do it. I thought it was so bad. It was so a bunch of BS and it made so little sense, and I was terrible. So I don't know exactly why. I'd have to go to some psychiatrist I guess to have me really understood.

**Joshua Bell:** I've heard that young veterans have similar experiences today?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:04:56] Oh really?

**Joshua Bell:** Yep, when they go back to school they find some of the problems that students have, younger students have, seem trivial compared to going to war.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:05:14] Oh yes, yes. That would be so.

**Joshua Bell:** So you're not alone.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:05:23] Yeah, well I heard that. At the time I was so puzzled and I would blab away my problems to friends and acquaintances and so forth. And they generally would say, "Well, I know another person who said the same story." So I do understand that I wasn't alone. That is something that human being, some human beings anyway, have to deal with. And I'm not sure why you know, I should have laughed at myself and made fun of me and forgotten the dark side. It served no purpose. It didn't help me anyway.

[00:06:23] But anyway what point I brought all this up for was to say that I thought that I would be a good teacher after all. But I couldn't see going, once the guy told me that was interpreting, I couldn't see going seven years. Now I don't understand why he said seven years, unless going back to school, going through school as a student for seven years. I guess you'd need to do that to get a master's or a doctorate or something that enable you to earn more. So I don't know. Anyway I didn't do that, and so I ended up in a

terrible position in my life, a person without an education, without a college degree.

**Joshua Bell:** I want to go back for a minute to the field that you were an instructor at, which field was that again?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:07:50] Oh yeah, I was an instructor at Peterson Field in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

**Joshua Bell:** How did the other guys feel about being instructors?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:08:07] The other three guys? Well two of them I didn't meet until we were leaving that field and going on the train and heading to what ultimately was Attu Island. But anyway we really didn't get to talk together very well while we were traveling, and I don't know why that exactly. But anyway when we finally got a place that was ours to stay and we were in traveling we got to know each other better. And I didn't see any difference in their reaction to our situation than my own.

[00:09:07] They were puzzled and not happy principally because we didn't get to, hoped for having the opportunity to fly a P-51. And flying was the thing that we wanted to do, and we had a choice in airplane as in our wishes you know. And that 51 was the wish. Well here we were way out at the end of the Aleutian chain in the middle of nothing and flying old P-40s still. So that didn't sit very well.

**Joshua Bell:** Did you ever get a, oh I'm sorry go ahead.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:10:02] Beg your pardon.

**Joshua Bell:** You were going to say something?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:10:05] No, no.

**Joshua Bell:** Oh okay, I was going to ask if any of the cadets ever gave you a scare.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:10:13] Beg pardon?

**Joshua Bell:** When you rode with the cadets did any of them ever give you a scare or were they good pilots?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:10:23] The people that I was leading?

**Joshua Bell:** Yep.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:10:30] Not really. Pardon me I have stuff in my throat.

**Joshua Bell:** Oh that's all right, that's all right.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:10:44] No, what happened is that near the end of that part of my service when I was getting close to being shipped out again I gave myself a scare. And I think I told you about that, taking off cross-country.

**Joshua Bell:** I don't recall.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:11:11] Beg pardon.

**Joshua Bell:** I don't recall.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:11:15] Oh. Well, I was leading a flight in one day. It was at noontime, and the air was filled with planes everybody trying to get back at the same time. And so what you do is land on opposite sides of the runway. You land clear over by the side, so that the other space of the runway is a guy behind you. And if he happens to pass you he's got space to pass you instead of running into you from the rear. And that was happening, and there was a strong crosswind from the right. And so you'd turn into the right, turn into the wind so the wind wouldn't blow you off the runway.

[00:12:23] And when you go to stall you turn the plane quickly to head down the runway so you don't land in a crab, you know. And then the plane will stall and drop on to the runway and roll that way and you're okay. Well, my plane wasn't doing what it was supposed to do. I'd feel the stall coming,

and I would use rudder to get out of the crab. And it didn't drop. The left wing would drop, and then that would push the right wing, and I had full flaps on. And so the crosswind would catch that underside of that right wing and exaggerate the blowing effect.

[00:13:23] And I was getting closer to the side of the runway, and it wasn't stalling. It was stalling only on the left wing not both wings, and I would end up kicking it back into the crab to keep from blowing off. And I was getting closer to the side. Fortunately, I wasn't catching up with the guy in front of me. That would be just a little embarrassing because it would say your technique wasn't very good if that was happening. It was okay to happen, that's why the staggering from time to time. Well anyway the third time this happened I had tipped the crab out and it was feeling like it was going to stall and drop.

[00:14:26] And it didn't, then it blew over to the edge of the runway and the left wing went down, and the right wing went up. And then the left wing went down so far it looked like it was going to stick into the ground. And that would cartwheel me, and you're lading your canopy is open. And the dirt at the side of the runway was the common dirt around that area. And it was soft, and dusty, and filled with - oh, I don't know - not cactuses, but a prairie type vegetation.

[00:15:20] And if I stubbed the wing and it cartwheeled me I'd end up upside down, and my face would be in that dirt. And that didn't seem like a good idea. So I didn't want to let that wing stub itself on the ground. So I gave it full throttle to get some wind going behind by the tale, so the rudder would be effective in helping level the wings. And when I got up level I was pointed about 45 degrees off the runway. And I just starting going cross-country. There wasn't any choice; I had to keep from cartwheeling.

[00:16:15] You know, I just hoped I didn't meet any big rocks. And in training fields like that they have a runway control, a guy with a radio and a Jeep out alongside the runway watching each plane come in and land. And while I was going across country with a stick pulled into my belly so that the tail was down so it would less likely turn nose down if it hit an obstruction.

The tower guy kept hollering at me to put the nose down. So I didn't want to put the nose down and make it easier to go nose in to the dirt.

[00:17:17] And finally the runway control guy told the tower to shut-up. And it felt so good to have someone understand my dilemma. And anyway it finally got lighter on the wheels, and pulled back on the stick less hard and let the tail come up. And pretty soon it lifted off the ground and I was flying, so flew around. I went over a barbed wire fence, and I don't know why I was worried about a barbed wire fence. It's a 9,000 pound airplane. That's human nature I guess. So anyway I came in for a landing, and landed it. And wondered what in the world caused all that. And when I parked my head started telling me things, and set there and started to go through the Form 41.

[00:18:27] It's a form that you log your details of your flight, the time of day and all that sort of thing. And anyway I did that, and then I started looking for the form because my head was remembering an incident sometime back where the left wing stalled. And I figured I bet I'm in the same plane, because that's what happened. This left wing stalling didn't help at all, and by golly I found it where I'd written it up. And it was about two weeks back. By that time the commander of the field was at the plane and standing at the wingtip with that runway control guy standing there. And they're looking at the wingtip, and they're motioning for me to come down.

[00:19:29] So I did, and the runway control guy says, "I thought I told you to fly better than that." And the funny thing is he never had taught me anything. He had never been an instructor of mine. He was obviously making words for the commanding officer to hear. So anyway they said to come and look, and I came to look and there is the three furthestmost rivets and the plane is painted an olive green color you know, to be a camouflage color. But anyway the three outermost rivets on the underside of the wing tip had the paint scrapped off of them.

[00:20:26] And that's how close I had come to catching that wing tip in the ground and doing a cartwheel. I was very thankful it wasn't you know, what could have happened instead. So I was asked to tell what happened, and I told. And when I got through the planning officer said to the sergeant, the

crew chief there to, "Take that damn plane out and burn it." Which I thought was a pretty terrible thing to do. That plane apparently had ground looped before some time. And either the wind had been replaced or it had been repaired and put on.

[00:21:25] And it didn't line up as the original wing should, and so it was at a different angle. And it stalled before the right wing, and the only way they could solve that would be to you know, look to see what parts are holding it on the plane and see if they're bent. And look thoroughly and closely at the attachments because some place in there they've got some bend or some misshapen portion so.

**Joshua Bell:** You must have been happy to be back on the ground.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:22:14] Oh yeah, yeah. Yeah, yep, yeah I had that a couple of times, but that, that was the most serious because of the fact that there had been so many accidents the commanding officer had stated that if we have any more he's going to close the field. And closing the field would mean that those returned combat guys that were functioning as instructors couldn't live off the field with their wives. They'd have to stay on the field and their wife would have to be alone. And they would be very unhappy, and I would hate to be the person that caused that to happen.

[00:23:13] It was a pretty drastic edict for the commanding officer to bring up, but he needed to do something to make people try harder to not have an accident. And that ground looping type accident was common because the P-40 has such narrow landing gear. They're not spread wide enough, and the tail rudder doesn't have enough control. Because when you go to land three points the tail is down behind the fuselage, and the wind doesn't go by it with sufficient speed and so forth. And you're a mile high and the air at the mile high is less dense than at sea level. And there is less of it to have an airplane control work against.

[00:24:20] And so it's less effective that way.

**Joshua Bell:** You said that there were some other, oh I'm sorry go ahead.



**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:24:29] No go ahead, you do. Your turn.

**Joshua Bell:** You said there were some other times that you were happy to be back on the ground. Do you recall those instances?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:24:44] Let's see if I can remember one. Oh, when I'm just chatting with the guys without any purpose I come up with all these stories, and now I can't think of them. I'm going to have to write them down. Let's see though. Oh, one time we practiced the flight routine that we would have to fly to go over to the Japanese islands. And we were in P-38s then, and we were all loaded up on this flight you know.

[00:25:46] And like we were going to war, the 50 millimeter machine guns and 20 millimeter cannon, and then the little rockets, ten rockets under each wing and two bombs, and external gas. And the weight was getting pretty high. I don't know I have a book on the 38 where it speaks of the plane and the model number that we were flying, which was the last one, the P-38-15. That was carrying about, could carry about 22,000 pounds. I mean as total weight it could be that. And so I guess that's probably what we were carrying then in this simulated mission.

[00:26:49] And anyway we went up the chain, and pretend we were firing all this stuff. So we got rid of it, and the external gas tanks and the dummy bombs and all that kind of stuff and started back. And on the way back the flight leader, good god.

[Audio cuts]

**Joshua Bell:** The, the last that I had when we spoke you were telling me about the instructor on you, not your instructor, the crews on your P-38 training run where you had the rockets. And you had just dropped your gas tanks.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:27:58] Well, was I telling you that you we were on simulated mission?

**Joshua Bell:** Yes it was.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:28:04] And, and we were loaded with some ammunition and gas like we would have been going over to the Japanese islands. And did that. We went up the chain, went up towards Anchorage, and I forget what island we did this at, but it was a distance from our Attu Island to equal the distance that the Japanese islands would have been. So we were mimicking what we were going to do. And then on the way, and all this was to lead up to the point that on the way back the flight leader didn't keep the same setting.

[00:29:05] And what we were doing this for was to determine whether or not we could really go that far in these planes. If our gas consumption was theoretical, these planes were specially modified. We had doors in the induction system, and where the air came in and we could control them. We could close them, and that allowed us to turn down the RPMs of the engine. And in doing that we would burn less gas. It'd take us longer to get there, but we would use less gas to get there. And of course that's what we wanted to do is get there and get back. So we were mimicking that sort of a thing.

[00:30:05] And that was lousing up our purpose of our trip is the leader goes faster, sets the RPM settings of the engine faster than we were supposed to we wouldn't get a true test of the use of fuel. So he just flew off the handle of us, and his poor wingman that had to follow him. And finally the wingman called me. And I'm not sure why, but he did and I suggested to him that when you get to the intersection just circle there until we catch up. And then you can join us. And the intersection is radio signals.

[00:31:04] It's radio range, that was the way we went from place to place. And it's radio range just gives out signals; it's an A and an N. And an A is a dit dah, and the N is a dah dit in the Morris code. And when they come together they make a steady sound. They fill each other's voids, and makes a steady sound. And then usually it is, although I guess not usually, it consists of if it's written out on paper it would have four arms. And that's where the steady sound is, and two of the four quadrants would have the A.

[00:32:05] If you were flying it in the A you hear this dit dah, dit dah. And the other two that turns 90 degrees dit dah, would be the N, and that was a dah dit, dah dit. And you'd know which quadrants you were in, and where they came together it was a steady sound. Well what we were on is going up and down the chain we were on station on an island for the east-west traveling. But then there was a radio range station down by Adak, and it was sending a signal. There was an arm with a steady sound that intersected this one that was following the chain.

[00:33:11] So that was an intersection of the two, and will turn station frequencies to catch finally when those two would cross and we'd know where we were. So then we would turn and take up the heading that was printed for that leg and fly to Adak and to the field there. Well anyway I was concerned because I wasn't familiar with the field and the territory. We were landing on a new runway that was going a new way to me anyway. I'd only been there I think a couple of times before, and so I thought instead of doing our circle thing where you go fly in an echelon where the planes are staggered to the right or to the left and that would be an echelon.

[00:34:20] And you fly, get down to 500 feet above the runway and then in this echelon the leader would peel off from the flight. And then the other guy would count to about three and peel off, and they would all do the same. So pretty soon here are all these airplanes playing follow the leader. And what they do is go in a big circle and kind of go up in the air with the throttle off. So you lose speed, and point down the field and the wheels the landing gear and put down flaps if you're going to use them and the throttle off until you get down to the lower landing speed.

[00:35:15] And by then you're probably around to the landing end of the runway, and you let down and make a landing. And if you did that in an area that you're unfamiliar and there was several layers of clouds in there I was concerned that somebody would get kind of disoriented in that circle maneuver where you're changing speed and you're doing all these things. So I thought well why don't we just get some spacing and go in a line and trail one after another. And then we wouldn't be going into strange territory or

into clouds or anything.

[00:36:10] We surely could find our way to the runway because no one that we'd talked to there told us that it was a closed field or dangerous in terms of lack of sight to land there. And so finally the guys got their spacing behind me, and so the guy immediately behind me told me it was my turn. You know, you can slow down. Well, by then I was on a final approach to the runway and there was a new runway about 9,500 feet I think. And I decided to land on it, well it was just a practice landing.

[00:37:04] And I ran off the other end of the runway going between two rows of P-40s and heading for a crewman going to tell me where to park. And I couldn't tell him that he was in a dangerous spot because I was going too fast, and so I ended up ground looping the plane right in front of the guy. And one of the guys came out to meet me was a fellow that had been transferred there that I had gone through quite a time in service with. And the CO didn't like him and moved him to Adak. Well he came out, I opened my canopy, and he was laughing.

[00:38:05] And he says something about my probably needing a good stuff drink. And I allowed that's how he made a good guess. But anyway that was kind of a scary thing to me - going too fast. I knew I was in trouble, and I just had to manage it. Just ecstatic. That was another lesson of what not to do. So I don't know there is some more but I can't really think of them right now. There was a--

**Joshua Bell:** Was the plane comfortable to fly in?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:38:58] I don't know. Are you with me?

**Joshua Bell:** Oh I'm here, I'm here. Was the P-38 a comfortable plane to fly in?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:39:09] Oh, the P-38 was a wonderful plane after the P-40 especially and then solution weather situations there, the P-38 was like a rocking chair or a baby bassinet or something. It had wide landing gear, which makes a tremendous difference. You're less ground looking with a

gear like that and you have much more control. Of course you have two tails, and so and then that gives you so much more control than the P-40 tail gave. It has two engines faced apart, and you can use their power to help control you know, choosing one or the other to move the plane.

[00:40:17] Anyway, it had good breaks if I recall correctly. They were different than most. I think they were metal disks. And I always had that in mind when I used them like that time I was telling you when I ran down the runway and went off of it I had really tromped on the brakes hard. And then I was worried because those metal disks had been known to get so hot that they sort of meld together. And they have trouble unsticking them then, but that didn't happen to me.

[00:41:07] And they have engines and propellers that turned opposite ways from the other. And that eliminates the torque that comes from say a single engine plane like the P-40. When you first learn to fly the P-40 lots of people will run off the runway because it just pulls you. And that's the torque that occurs, P-38 didn't have that. It was much better suited in a comfort style. It was warmer, and a little bit quieter, and of course after you checked out you got to fly the new ones.

[00:42:11] You could check out an old ones, so there wouldn't be much loss if you crashed it. Anyway it was a dandy plane, and it had a radio feature, a radio compass, which they didn't have on the P-40, which was helpful. You could tune in the station and have a pointer point at it, and that's pretty nice to have someone saying go this way. And it had such a load of armament that you felt that you could really accomplish something if you the opportunity you know? You had plenty of firepower.

[00:43:10] You had plenty of firepower just to attack land targets, so it had a more fulfilling feeling. You could do something with that.

**Joshua Bell:** I was going to ask you if you felt you know, kind of like a big shot in a good way with all the armament that those things could carry?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:43:39] Oh yeah, of course you know, young, foolish, anything that helps the ego you know. You know, like going from a model A

to the V8. I had a Model A so I know what I'm talking about.

**Joshua Bell:** Oh wow.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:44:05] But I still wanted to fly, but I didn't really want to go to the Aleutians. But no one asked me. I'll never know why it turned out that way.

**Joshua Bell:** In hindsight are you pleased with the assignment that you got?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:44:35] Well yes, I started to get more sure of myself, and that's a different feeling that being anxious about yourself all the time. I felt that I was becoming quite capable in handling the airplane, which was the main mission to, for me at the time. And I was getting a better feeling about my relationship with other people you know. I was able to give an account of myself.

[00:45:35] And it ended up that I was wingman for the commanding officer.

**Joshua Bell:** What was his name?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:45:56] His name was Dean Davenport, and he had kind of a reputation because he was on the, the flight of B-25s that practiced until they could fly off of the aircraft carrier. And the aircraft carrier took them over near Japan as close as they dared. But still close enough to do some good, so those B-25s could bomb Tokyo.

**Joshua Bell:** Doolittle's Raid.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:46:42] Yeah, just you know, a psychological thing, and they did that. And successfully, and there was somebody running a camera like a motion picture camera taking a picture of their take off out in the ocean you know. And, and one plane went off the end into the aircraft carrier, and then it dropped down and it looked like it was going to go right in the water. And just watching it you know, you're sucking your breath and saying oh my gosh. But they caught themselves, and didn't go in the water but it was about as close as you can get and not have it happen. And the

story was that the co-pilot pulled up the flaps instead of the wheels.

[00:47:49] His assignment see was to as soon as we get off this carrier pull up the wheels. They're a drag in the wind. That's the first thing you do, get them up. And well they pulled up the flaps first, they left the drag down, and the things providing extra lift were the flaps, and they were pulled up and so the plane dropped. Well you know, I don't know that I knew as much as I'm telling now at that time. I was concerned with myself more than other people, but anyway I soon learned who he was.

[00:48:42] And no one meets you, you know, when you come to a place like that there is no greeting committee. Finally you find some sergeant who tells you where you can sleep, and tells you where to go to get a sleeping bag and that sort of stuff. But it's really very not accommodated, that is your rival isn't accommodating in any way. So we didn't see the commanding officer when we first arrived. But we did a few days later, and I and I think two of the three guys were in the hut.

[00:49:44] And we used our trench knives and someone of us found a block of wood, and we put it at the end of this empty hut we were in, the pacific hut not the metal Quonset. And used our trench knives to try to learn to throw them and stick them in this block of wood just like any little kids you know. Something to do hey, we were bored. And pretty soon one day some heavy feet came tromping up the steps out of the snow and enter our hut. And I recognized some major leaves on the uniform of this guy.

[00:50:46] And so I had to yell 'attention' you know, and it turned out to be a commanding officer. And wanted to know, "What in the hell we were doing making all that damn noise there?" He lived in the hut right behind us, right adjacent to us. Right adjacent to the back end of our hut. And he was pretty perturbed by hearing those bang bangs of those knives hitting that block of wood or the side of the hut, whatever the case may be. And I had to explain this to him. And of course we said we were through with that. So that was our meeting of our commanding officer.

[00:51:42] And I never talked to him. Never had words with him as I

remember until one day at lunchtime he says, "Hubbard," and I was going to fly a blue flight. And that's a flight you fly just for exercise because the next half-day you're going to fly a red flight where you just sit and wait for the scrambled bell to ring. Well anyway he said, "I'm going to lead blue flight today, and I want you to fly my wing." So I had to find out where his plane was and so forth, and taxi out to the runway behind him cause I'm going to fly his wing. So that's what happened.

[00:52:42] And it was the craziest ride I've ever went through. He did all kinds of stuff, and it seemed me the intent was to try to lose me, and I felt competitive about that. And I said, "If that's what he's going to try to do he's not going to do it." And he didn't. But we gathered up as a flight and headed back for the field, and we were about 5,000 feet high and to the southeast. And it was good weather and that was a problem, and I finally got a chance to be away from him a little bit. So I had a little bit of room so I could look elsewhere instead of at him for a half a second. And I looked at my [gaff's] gauges cause I had no idea.

[00:53:43] And they both said, they pointed right on E. and they didn't wiggle. Sometimes you know, they were pointing E, but there is enough gas in there they wiggle a little bit with the plane's wiggling you know. And so I said to the, he would be the blue flight leader, I said, "Blue Flight Leader this is Blue 2, I am out of gas and I'm heading straight for the field." And I just took off and headed straight for the field. I felt I didn't, I couldn't stand to do the normal big circle you know, landing routine. Cause I didn't have any gas. And I don't swim, and I was over this cold water and I didn't want to go in it, and so--

**Joshua Bell:** Seems like pretty good motivation.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:54:50] Beg pardon?

**Joshua Bell:** Seems like pretty good motivation to get to the field.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:54:54] Oh, I had tremendous motivation. So anyway when I landed and went into our squadron area off of the normal where we took off from, the mechanics pointed me to another spot a little removed.



And there was mechanics all over the place, they knew what my problem was. And as soon as I turned off the prop two of them jumped up one of each wing with sticks. Sometimes they would use a stick and that's what they would say is stick the gas tanks. And with a stick you can tell exactly, you know, your gauges may be off manmade stuff like that, that can be off.

[00:55:56] But the stick doesn't, you know, it's--

**Joshua Bell:** --tank.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:56:06] Oh, okay. That was the key point of all that, that I had landed. The engine was still running. I turned it off but I wouldn't have run much longer. It as rather strange. And anyway that was just a learning experience. And dealing with yourself when you're in a bad spot like I felt I was at 5,000 feet and a little distance from the runway. And the only thing that was available to me was water. And I have an aversion to that kind of water, it's cold.

[00:57:06] So anyway and did I tell you about the crew chiefs laughing?

**Joshua Bell:** No.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [00:57:16] No, well those two guys that were sticking the tanks they would hold up the sticks to show the other guys around that they were dry. And they were all laughing, they thought that was the funniest thing they had ever seen. And I didn't really think it was that funny. So I understand that though, that it was a kind of an unusual thing when somebody comes in and parks their plane. And they don't have any gas in the tanks. They can't find gas with their sticks, and the plane was running and was shut off. So how close it was to shutting off from lack of gas we'll never know.

[00:58:16] But anyway that was quite an experience, and later on after we'd had the P-38s for a while and I'm sure it was before the end of the war, we through our commanding officer had an assignment to make an attack on a B-20, pardon me a B-50. I was going to say 29, but it was a new plane that Boeing had built, and the first one of to present to the government was a

B-50.

[00:59:16] It was monstrous, and it was all silver, you know, aluminum, shiny aluminum silver. And it was coming to Alaska, it was coming to Adak island as a matter of fact. And our commanding officer got up, okay from the group headquarters, which was also on Adak to make a simulated attack. And see if we could sneak in under their radar and do that. And I was a wingman of the CO, and so we flew from Attu to Adak you know, right on top of the water as long as we could get so we could under radar.

[01:00:15] And when we got there then we rose in the air about 400 feet, and turned into the airfield where this B-50 was parking. And of course this was the first experience where you really were flying, and theoretically fighting, and maintaining your formations. And it's not easy to do all that without running into the guy whose wing you're flying anyway. Anyway, we came up and there we could see the B-50, and we're coming into it from its tail direction.

[01:01:14] And we were taking pictures with our gun camera, which we saw later. And my gun camera showed me shooting the hell out of that B-50, and then I was following the leader who turned left. And left was a big parking area for planes and a big hangar. And I got good pictures of where I would be staffing those things. And people running like the dickens, and you know, when you're jumped on like that they didn't even have to even look and find out we weren't an enemy really. They were acting like we were, and pretty soon the P-40s had taken off and were coming on us.

[01:02:18] And the guy showed us some shot with a P-40 coming. I thought we were going to collide, and shots of the tower, and it was a mess. They had to soon call it off, and it was something like we went through at training in Colorado Springs, overseas trainings when a flight of B-24s came up from Pueblo south of Colorado Springs. And we went through that. It can be just as hazardous in peacetime as in wartime if you're going to try to shoot the other guy down. You got to get close enough to do it, but not run into him and vice versa.

[01:03:14] So anyway that was kind of a exciting trip, and I learned about flying without an opportunity to check your gas tanks, it's not good. And it was also not good flying with someone that doesn't fly very smoothly. But was doing it deliberately, that's no fun. And in return that man treated me very well, so I don't know what else to say. It was all a good experience for the time.

**Joshua Bell:** What was your rank throughout the process?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:04:06] Beg pardon?

**Joshua Bell:** What was your rank?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:04:09] Oh, I was as a second lieutenant. When you graduate from flight school you become a second lieutenant hopefully, and somewhere in there about that time I'm telling you about this lack of gas situation I got to be promoted. And it was when we were changing from P-40s to P-38s. Everybody got to move to Anchorage to fly a P-40 and fly back a P-38 except me. And I didn't understand that.

[01:05:07] But I was assigned to fly a P-40 that the commanding officer had crashed or something, and I think they changed the engine out. And it's probably that he'd hit the propeller against something in the ground, and if you're going to do that then the shaft into the engine is suspect and engine parts too. So they take it all apart to check on that. And in this instance they put just a new engine it and new propeller on the plane, and then you have to slow time to get about ten hours of flying time with a calm passageway.

[01:06:07] You have to fly it gently and don't put any excess stress on it until the engine gets worn in a little bit. And so it seemed like I was the only guy there, I don't know that I was, but it felt like I was the only guy and I was flying this plane to get ten hours on it so it would be properly slow timed and then put it into service. And then I got called to the headquarters shack, and they handed me some paper, which were orders. And one of them was advising me that I was promoted to a first lieutenant. Well that was pretty nice, you know. That doesn't look like I was being picked on.

[01:07:06] And here I gained the next rank, and then the other set of orders was for me to fly that P-40 to anchorage with a B-25 as a escort plane. And that was because the P-40s don't have very good instrument flying equipment. And so they would want to be sure that I didn't get in trouble because of that, so they sent the B-25. Which was fine cause the B-25 was playing games with me when we went into land at Adak Island. And I guess they wanted to be a fighter pilot, and so they flew the B-25 that way to see if I could stick with them.

[01:08:09] And boys will be boys. Anyway, that turned out to be kind of a fun trip and I got to fly the B-25 as a co-pilot a little bit. So I don't have another story right in mind at the moment.

**Joshua Bell:** Well that's all right, I want to thank you very much for sharing your stories with us. We really do appreciate it.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:08:49] Oh you're welcome. I feel so bad when I talk with people that I can't show the pictures in my mind of what it's really like. It's just a strange world. Here it is, you know, I don't know how many miles, I thought it was 1,700 from Attu to Anchorage. And you know, it's just mountaintops. It's terribly rugged. It's a difficult place even for the fishermen that go there for fishing purposes. And it's rough country to fly in because you have few choices of landing sites, and need to be aware of that at all times and where they are.

[01:10:00] And it's interesting to look at. The world has many interesting places you know, this place is one of them. Although it's not interesting from aesthetics, it's just interesting from a geographic standpoint or a geology I guess you'd say. But how the world is formed and shaped, and how it's made up and what it has in its structure. And how this arc of mountaintops ever came to be of course you never know.

**Joshua Bell:** And certainly how they came to be so important in the 1940s.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:10:57] Oh yeah that was such a surprise. You know, the whole thing and the airplanes had only, the first line fighter plane we had as far as I can recall was that P-40. And I guess there was quite a story about

it, and it went in various theaters of the war. Without we'd have been sunk, and lots of things like that. It was one great big lesson that I hope this country has learned that one needs to be prepared even though your budget is bad and you don't feel you've got money to waste on military things.

[01:12:02] It's important that you do waste it, cause you never know when it's going to save your life in the world's affairs.

**Joshua Bell:** Is there anything that I didn't ask you about that you'd like to add in?

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:12:31] Oh, I'm not that sharp anymore to keep track of different things to know and answer to that. I really don't know.

**Joshua Bell:** That's quite all right, if there is anything that you do recall that you want to add feel free to give me a call and we'll set up a time to do another interview.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:13:00] Well, about the only thing that you can get into now about World War II is just philosophical stuff, you know talking about the equipment, or manpower, or whatever is too old to talk about. And the only thing that's left is what lessons were created. And that did end up being an easy one to say, but not easy to follow. And it's the same as the Boy Scouts, be prepared. And that's so true.

[01:14:00] The Aleutian Islands had virtually nothing on them in way of usable equipment or facilities. There were some native peoples that were called Aleuts that lived there and in scattered islands. And we've, that is the government took them off and put them in I don't even remember the place now in the mainland to keep them out of trouble. And so it disrupted their life and lifestyle forever. It's too bad that we hadn't thought in the -- be prepared mode and put facilities that one could use and would need when they're attacked.

[01:15:07] Instead they're trying to gather up at the last minute. I think that probably it hasn't really been learned. As they're talking in Congress now about the budget and the military part of it, and I just read something in the

paper the other day how many military people have been let go, and the facilities not used, and equipment you know. But I suppose that the question there is well, what do you do with them? We're short of money, and spend money on something that may never happen.

[01:15:59] But still there needs to be at least a compromise effort, and that's about all they can talk about in talking about a long ago war. I thought it was an amazing reaction of a group of peoples, that is Americans, to being sort of blindsided and rising to the occasionally and ultimately successful. It was quite a tribute, and I think that's what that book of Tom Brokaw's is saying too. I've never read it, but I think he was commenting about that.

**Joshua Bell:** Yeah, your generation did a remarkable job at getting on its feet, and doing what had to be done to make the world a safer place again.

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:17:07] Yeah, well we didn't have a choice. You know, you either had to be successful or be under someone else's control. And that was an impossible thing to accept, you know so.

**Joshua Bell:** Well again thank you so much for spending some time with me, and--

**Bruce Hubbard:** [01:17:40] Oh you're welcome.

**Joshua Bell:** --and for doing your part at that challenging time in or history.

[End of recorded material 01:17:48]