

**Interview with Reuel H. Pietz (Part 1 of 2)**

**January 7, 1990**

**Central Minnesota Historical Oral History Collection**

**St. Cloud State University Archives**

**Interviewed by David Overy**

**Overy ([00:00:00](#)):**

Colonel Pietz, where and when were you born?

**Pietz ([00:00:13](#)):**

Born on Clover Creek Farm, Rose Hill Township, Cottonwood County, Minnesota. Near Westbrook, Minnesota.

**Overy ([00:00:23](#)):**

What were you doing when the war broke out?

**Pietz ([00:00:29](#)):**

When the war broke out, I was at Gustavus Adolphus College. And the day that it came, well-- The athletes at Gustavus lived mainly in two places. They lived under the stadium in kind of four barracks-like rooms there. Or, the others, about 16 of them, lived out of the state hospitals where they had half an attendance job, out at the state hospital. Those were the days before tranquilizers, and so forth. So, they really needed athletes out there, to handle many of the patients at the hospital. Matter of fact, I think one ward had only three patients, and six attendants. You get the idea? They were strong ones, too. So, when we were living there, and when the news came, it was on a Sunday. Then, we all decided that we had to go after them. So, Bob Goa and End said, "Let's go down and sign up, now." So, down to the courthouse we went,

of course, there was nobody there, luckily. Then, at that point, I decided to go in. And I had a friend at Carleton College by name of Craig Sallis. Who, was helping a barnstormer by name of Captain Kip, who was a Marine from World War One type of guy, and a barnstormer, and so forth. Helping him make money setting up CPT programs, Civilian Pilot Training programs. And Craig had set one up at Carleton, and so he talked to me, and he said, "Kip will help us get in the Marine Corps, as aviators." I had talked to the Marine recruiter, and he said, "Just sign up, and go down to Paris Island. When you get through, we'll send you to flight school, and you'll become an aviator." Well, Craig Sallis told me, that was not the way to do it, I cursed damned Kip. So, we went into, it was called a V-5 program, Navy Cadet program. I couldn't get in right away, because I had-- My father died of diabetes, so they wanted to check my blood sugar. So, they didn't have the equipment at the cadet selection board, so I went back to my doctor, the football doc at Gustavus. He had me tested. He tested my blood sugar and put me on a rigorous diet for about 10 days, to bring it down. And so, that's how I got in. And then, I went into flight school at Minneapolis. Started at Minneapolis, went down to Corpus Christi, went through. And Captain Kip told us that if we want to be sure to get in the Marine Corps when we got through, he says to write a letter to the Comrade in the Marine Corps now, when you're a cadet. And tell him how much you want to get in. Well, no other cadets knew that much, see. Actually, when you got through flight school, they took a certain percent of the men to the Marine Corps. And the rest of them into the Navy. In other words, a percent of those people who applied to go into the Marine Corps, upon completing flight school, would be put in. Now, if there are a lot of them that are put in, of course then they could be pretty selective of who they took. So, we didn't want to take that chance. We wanted to be like Captain Kip, barnstormer, local hero. So, we wrote, and told him how much we wanted to. And the Commandant came back with a letter to Corpus

Christi, where we were going. And it says, "Well, Charles Craig Sallis, and Reuel Henry Petes, upon successful completion of flight school, commission these two lads to the Marine Corps."

And so, that's how we got into the Marine Corps aviation, which turned out to be alright, because I'm still here, anyway.

**Overy** ([00:05:02](#)):

Tell me about your flight training.

**Pietz** ([00:05:06](#)):

Your flight training started at Wold-Chamberlain, and you had some physical training, too. But mainly, you'd start out flying a plane called a Spark, which is a bi-plane type, Spartan. And a complete dog, you flew that for about two hours. And then, we flew an N3N. I'm sorry, and then we flew an N2S, which was a Stearman. So, then we flew the Stearman, which was about the same as an N3N, which was a Navy factory made plane. And that was another biplane type. And you flew that to where you did solo work, got to the point where you did solo. And then, you went to the second phase, which was B-stage, they called it. And you went through that, and you did things like S-turns, to circles. And slip, you learned to slip an airplane. And yeah. And then, the next phase after that was aerobatics. And by that time, we were transferred down to Corpus Christi. There, we went into Rod field, we went through aerobatics. And that was learning how to do loops, and all of those sorts of things. That was called C-stage. And then, they had a stage called D-stage, which was formation flying. And you learned how to fly in formation. And then, you were through with that, so then you went into intermediate training. We flew two kinds of planes there, an OS2U, and a Vultee plane, which we called a Vultee vibrator. Not very good planes, but they were low-wing monoplanes. Or, are now, auto biplanes. We flew those, and learned some instrument flying, and some intermediate type flying. And then, from there, you

went into Advanced Flying. You'd either go into what we call an SNJ, which is a North American low-wing trainer, which had a 130-caliber machine gun firing through the prop, coordinated through the prop. Incidentally, the Thai Air Force was still flying these when I went to northern Thailand, in 1962. That's what they had for their fighters squads, in those days. And then, other people went into-- Or, they might go into P-Boats, which was twin engine. I've forgotten who made it, PBY Consolidated, I guess.

**Overy** ([00:08:17](#)):

Oh.

**Pietz** ([00:08:18](#)):

Yeah. A patrol boat, type of thing, a twin engine.

**Overy** ([00:08:18](#)):

A Catalina. Yeah.

**Pietz** ([00:08:21](#)):

Catalina, that's right, which was a dog, a very slow plane. Some people went into OS2Us, and I went into OS2Us, which was a floatplane. And then, you were supposed to be able to fly off a Battleship, or a Cruiser, over at Marine Corps. They didn't use you very much for that, but I think they were pushing people through in flight school, because they were losing a lot of people at that time, overseas. So, they were anxious to get people through, quick. Although, they only needed people in dive bombers, fighters and the torpedo bombers. They really needed the other people for patrol planes, although they did have one patrol squadron, I think, in the Virgin Islands for anti-sub patrol. So, I went through those, then. And then, from there I went out to San Diego, I was assigned to San Diego when I got my commission.

And I was in a pot, in a pool, I should say, that was going to go overseas. So, we sat in the pool there, waiting for transportation to ship you out. And all you have, you don't have any fighter time at all, but you're a fighter pilot, a designated fighter pilot in F4Fs. And you still haven't checked out any of the F4Fs, which was not unusual in those days. One of my friends, Rapid Robert Reed, was shot down on his first op in an F4F. He had to crank up the wheels, and call flaps for 35 turns, and 28 and a half turns on the wheels. So, he's just taking it off, and a Zeke came out and popped him, shot him down. He got shot down two more times too, so he got pretty mad at the Japanese by the time he was through. But, anyway, he got his boat out, and got in the water, alright. While we were waiting to go, all of a sudden, they pulled the seven top guys off the list, and sent us over to AS-- No, ABG-2, which was a kind of a utility squad, and it pulled tools, and dropped paratroopers. And pulled tools for coastal defense guns, and all that stuff. At that time, the West Coast was very nervous. They had blackouts on the West Coast. People were selling their houses for peanuts in Coronado Island, this sort of thing. And the coastal defense guns were practicing. I didn't really like-- We had targets, and tool cables you had to practice on. You didn't worry about it too much, because everybody shot behind like duck hunters, anyways. But it was a pretty boring thing, and I thought at that time, I could get up with some paratrooper wings. And the executive of the squadron really chewed me out, after I had made arrangements to do it. He said that, at that time, 40,000 was considered what an aviator was worth, the cost of putting him through. And he says, "Realize, they have \$40 000 invested in you, and you want to go leaping off things." All you had to do to get those wings, was 10 jumps off the tower, and three out of a plane. See? And I was hauling paratroopers, and where those docks were, they were willing to do it. So, I didn't get that, but I got chewed out anyway, for that. Then, a fellow named Bob Gaylor came over one day, and we were griping about the fact that we

didn't really like this kind of work. That, we wanted to get into fighters, and so forth. So, he said, "How many want to go?" All three of us wanted to go, to get out of there. And so, he said, "Okay. Well, I'll get your orders, and you'll be gone," because he was a personnel for Airwings Pacific. Nothing happened, so we started sending out your laundry. Now, that didn't sound like a big deal, but it took a week to get your laundry back. So, you had to be careful when you send your laundry back. So, we sent out our laundry, and we got our orders. And I went up to Mojave at that point, and got 16 hours in an F4F. And that was considered enough at that time, to go. I thought I was ready, but--

**Overy** ([00:12:53](#)):

Tell me, was your training-- I've always been curious about the Marine ethos, I guess. During the course of your training, were you indoctrinated, as far as-- I'm thinking about many of the Brown Marines. But was there anything like that involved in your-- As part of your training, or that you absorbed during that time?

**Pietz** ([00:13:19](#)):

Yeah. You got that. It's kind of this, catch as catch can, and so forth. You've got a little bit of indoctrination, mostly by lecturers when you're at Corpus Christi. But most of it came when you got into a squadron, just what was expected, of being told. But basic school per se, we didn't go through it at that time, which was a shortcoming I think, of a lot of Marine aviators. I know that, later on when I was getting second lieutenants, some directly from flight school. And some that had gone to flight school and basic school, that the officers that had both, were far superior.

**Overy** ([00:14:07](#)):

Was the discipline pretty rigid, when you were in flight school?

**Pietz** ([00:14:11](#)):

Oh, yeah. Yeah. You were treated-- Your flight school was, in a way, like a boot camp, and so forth. The interesting guy that went through all three of them, has got to be Tyrone Power.

Tyrone Power went through boot camp, and then next he went through basic school, he was sent to officer's training school. So, he went through that, another tough one, and then he went through flight school. So, he went through the three basic things. And he was in a-- And can you imagine, as a movie type of person, how they handled him? They poured it on to him, he got more than he needed, but he was a pretty tough guy.

**Overy** ([00:15:07](#)):

Did you know him at that time, or anything?

**Pietz** ([00:15:10](#)):

No. I met him, but I didn't fly with him. No.

**Overy** ([00:15:14](#)):

Did a lot of people not make it, through the various schools?

**Pietz** ([00:15:16](#)):

Yeah. There were quite a few washouts. In flight school, especially, they wouldn't wash out a lot of people. They didn't take much time with them, I mean, when they had enough aviators in the squadron. But then, they started getting tougher and tougher, really towards the end of the war. They started washing out more, and more. It was like, after I came back from overseas and went into operational training, they were really being very, very difficult with the people that wanted to get through. So, it got tougher. Actually, at the time that I went through, it was probably easier to get through flight school, than it was later on.

Because, later on, they came up with quotas, washed out so many, and all of that sort of thing. And we didn't have that. If you could fly, you got through, when I went through. So, the only people that didn't get through, were those people that really-- There are people that are just not mentally, and physically adapted to flying at all.

**Overy** ([00:16:31](#)):

So, they washed out mainly for those things, not--

**Pietz** ([00:16:34](#)):

Yeah. The ground school was pretty tough. You had to learn celestial navigation, and this sort of thing. Your navigation was on a plotting board. You really had to know at least trigonometry. I don't know why we needed to know celestial, I don't think I ever used it, but you're taught celestial navigation too. You would use it if you were doing long hops, but I never did. But you had to learn how to find where you were, by looking at the stars at night.

**Overy** ([00:17:09](#)):

Do you think your training was a good training?

**Pietz** ([00:17:13](#)):

Well, I think it could've been-- I think we went through it, pretty quick. I mean, when you think about only 16 hours, they were sending people over without a checkout in the plane they're going to fly in combat, that's rushing in. And I felt that I got 16 hours, so at the time, I thought that was pretty good.

**Overy** ([00:17:36](#)):

And this was the Corps services?

**Pietz** ([00:17:37](#)):

No, this is an F4F, Wildcats.



**Overy** ([00:17:40](#)):

Wildcats. Okay.

**Pietz** ([00:17:41](#)):

Yeah. Wildcats. So, we flew the Wildcats when I got out there. And this was a ground looping sucker. This is a narrow landing gear, and it didn't have much rudder control. A very short plane, and a pretty heavy engine. So that, you had quite a bit of torque. So, a combination of torque, and a crosswind made for a lot of ground looping in this plane. I never ground looped in it, and I'm quite proud of that fact. But I don't know. You thought you were ready, at that time. I think, later on, they just didn't have enough time to send people through. There was an F4F operational training course, with 100 hours. And those people that got to that, I thought, were very lucky. And then, they had another on that they called-- Another operational training which was called-- It wasn't quite, they called it something like, a sub operational training course, and so forth. Where, they put people through on Brewster Buffalo's, which I think they only got about 30 hours of that. So, people either got the full treatment of 100 hours in an F4F, and a full operational training, but everybody couldn't get that. Or, they got the 30 hours in a Brewster Buffalo, or they went over without any time at all, which a lot did. And you just checked out when you got over there. And you put it on, and flew. There were no two-seaters, you just got in, and went on down that line. You got a cockpit check out, you read the handbook, and you said, "Here, I go." And down the runway you went.

**Overy** ([00:19:37](#)):

When did you go overseas?

**Pietz** ([00:19:38](#)):

I went overseas, let's see, I'm trying to think. That was about, maybe, '43, '44? No, I'm trying to remember, now. Yeah, '43.

**Overy** ([00:20:10](#)):

'43?

**Pietz** ([00:20:12](#)):

I went over in '43.

**Overy** ([00:20:13](#)):

Yeah. Did you go over as part of--

**Pietz** ([00:20:15](#)):

We went over as replacement drafts, and a bunch of fighter pilots with some with more, some with less, with some time checked out in the F4F. And then, a bunch of SBD pilots, dive bomber pilots, went over. And we went over on a ship called the Pueblo, and there was no escort for the transport ship. So, they did zigzag to avoid the bombers, and we landed at Samoa. And then, at Samoa, from there, I was holding up to 441 in Nam, we had joined that squadron up there. Then, they were kind of worried because a submarine came in a shell Pago Pago, at Samoa. So, they wanted some people back. So, the junior people were brought back, and I was one of those, because I was just out there. So, they put a Lt. Col. Gordy Knott, but he was-- I don't know what happened to him, but he came back to Minneapolis, afterwards. So, let's see. So, there were five of us lieutenants, who were brought back to Samoa. And we flew patrol around Samoa there for a while, but we built up a lot of F4F time, at that point. Then, after the Turawa-- No, not after Turawa. After the Marshall operation, then the Corsairs came. They shipped the Corsairs out to us. So, that was Katy-bar-the-door, and so everybody just checked out on a plane right there, and

you just started flying it. You didn't get any training in that particularly area. You got a few fam hops around, and you took it on up, and went there. And it was a beautiful airplane, so there was really no problem. The war was over when we got that beauty. The Japanese had no chance after that because it would go higher. See, when we had F4Fs-- F4Fs, I think it took, as I remember, 26, 27 minutes to get to 30,000 feet. And you're straining, you've got your blowers full open, and so forth, to get up there. And you could get some of them up to maybe 32,000, and so forth. Well, a Zeke could get up to about the same, 30,000 or 32,000. And he could do it a lot quicker, but the Zeke had no armor plate. We had self-sealing gas tanks. We had armor plate under our butts, and behind our back, and so forth. So, we were quite a bit heavier, but once we both got to 32,000, boy, he was in trouble. And his plane was not strong enough in a dive, for example, to stand the Gs that we could stand. The trouble is, with-- And a lot of F4Fs shot down a lot of Zekes. The reason is, once they were sturdier, once they got up-- So, the guys who were down at Guadalcanal, they're all waiting. They were Australians, and coast watchers that were able to radio down, and tell them when they were coming down a slot. So, they had that 28 to 30 minutes to get up there, and get their altitude. And then, it was Katy-bar-the-door, and so they shot a lot of Japanese planes down. And were able to control the situation in Guadalcanal, the Solomon Islands. And to stop the Japanese at that point. So, between the coastal watchers, and the F4F Wildcats, they were able to do it. But then, I think it was about, November-- Yeah. You know, maybe it was about-- I guess it would probably, be into '44. Probably, maybe around February of '44, or so that we got all the Corsairs. All the squadrons got rid of the F4Fs, and got Corsairs.

The thing is that the Navy didn't like it, because the problem with the Corsair was, with that gull wing, it would tend to flip over on the stall, if you get it to stall. And it stalled pretty high, on a carrier, it'd stall about 73 knots, and you bring it around. Yeah. Bring us some coffee.

**Speaker 3** ([00:24:59](#)):

Coffee?

**Pietz** ([00:25:14](#)):

Yeah. Please. Well, the other thing is, that we always made three-point landings. Because, if you go on a carrier, that's the kind of landing you want, so that your hook is down, and you catch on it. So, most of the Navy planes, and Marines get their planes through the Navy department, will make three-point landings. The trouble with the Corsair at first, is it had, its tailwheel is such, that the attitude is it would tend to stall. So, they fixed that by building a higher tailwheel. Also, it's difficult, have you ever looked in a Corsair? You sit quite aways back.

**Overy** ([00:25:52](#)):

Yes.

**Pietz** ([00:25:53](#)):

So, that means you have to be in a turn, to be able to see ahead. And you come out over the carrier, and you pop it in about like that. So, it was a fairly tricky plane as prop planes go, to bring on, on a carrier. But they came up with a spoiler, just like, it's just a little piece of wood they've put on one of the wings. So that, that spoiled the airfoil, so the wings would drop more evenly. So that, you wouldn't flip over when you're stalling. And the tendency to fall straight when you want to make a full stall landing, which you have to do on a carrier if you wanted to get in. Otherwise, you pull out too much wire.

So, that, and then they build a bubble, instead of the bird cage, we used to call it. So, you could see a little better, too. And they'd put the tailwheel up, so that your three-point attitude was not quite as bad. You had trouble on takeoff too, if there was grass. You could, what we called a grasshopper, the thing with that low tailwheel, in the beginning. But once they got those two things corrected, it was the airplane, because you could go up-- Now, you're talking about Zekes at 32,000 feet, the best, maybe one got to 34,000, sometimes. But the Corsair would go right up to 40,000. You'd go on up to 40,000, it had so much more speed, had great firepower on it. And then, and you had Aileron boost on it, see? So, you could control it at a high speed. See, some airplanes when you get at high speeds, the stick is like it's in cement. You can't do very much, but this was a beautiful airplane. So then, that was, as I said, that meant, sayonara, Japanese, after that. So, we got that, I think, in February of about, that would be '44 when we got those. By then, I'm in the other squadron.

**Overy** ([00:28:01](#)):

By that, you were in four, was it the four--

**Pietz** ([00:28:04](#)):

I was in 441, at first, in F4Fs. And then, when I had to go back to the hospital with John. And when I came back up, by then they felt that I should go to-- They were short on pilots. We didn't have that many extra aviators in those days, and the same with planes. You got your 24 planes, you lost one, that's tough, then you had 23. And if you lost aviators, you really didn't get them. You didn't get any replacements until the next replacement draft came out. And so, after I came back from the hospital, and the headquarters decided that they needed more in 111. So, down to 111 I went, which was at Macon, which turned out to be okay.

If you're alive, every move turns out to be the right one. So, then I went down to that one, and we flew Corsairs there. And of course, there weren't-- We did patrols, because planes would come in sometimes. While I was at Roi-Namur on Kwajalein, probably the single most disastrous-- We probably, lost more on one single bombing raid, than lost any place else. Europe, or U.S. or anything, because 12 Bettys came in, and got about half of a Marine air group stuck. Which, we had ashore, and we didn't have any planes to meet them, so the 12 came in, and pounded us one night, and took that. See? That basically was the only tough bombing raid that we had.

**Overy** ([00:29:58](#)):

And this was on what island?

**Pietz** ([00:30:00](#)):

These were on two islands in the north part of the Kwajalein Atoll. The Kwajalein Atoll has a lot of islands around it.

**Overy** ([00:30:06](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Pietz** ([00:30:07](#)):

And the southern one, it's called Kwajalein, and there was Roi-Namur were two of the northern ones. They had named all those Atoll, Spitzer. They had told us that they were going to they said, start putting a Marine in the Air group for shore, but the runway wasn't ready. So, we loaded our ammo ashore, and all our oils, and gasoline supplies, and everything else. And they came, and the Navy was supposed to provide the cover for that night, but the Navy has a very serious-- I don't want to say it. They care about their ships. So, they thought when they came, that the best thing was to turn out the lights, and slink slowly to the East. So, they never even send any planes up.

So, we took quite a pounding that night, and they took all of our stuff. And so, on that point, after that was over, I went down to Macon and joined 111, and checked out on the F4U there. The runways were coral runways, then they had a thing called PSP, Pure Steel Plank, which was like more cementing over that stuff. Well, they put that stuff on. The trouble of that, is the heat in the middle of the day. But of course, there was a nice wide landing gear. And everything else worked fine, but it was pretty wavy at times. So, we flew a lot of missions out of there.

**Overy** ([00:31:58](#)):

What were your missions? What did your missions usually involve?

**Pietz** ([00:32:02](#)):

Okay. We had combat air patrol, that was one, and that you got no business doing it. They just weren't coming through from Truck, is the closest place they could come, about that one. And so, the other thing you do would be, you do dawn and dusk patrols. They'd go up, and see what they had on these islands. See where they're bringing them in with submarines, and so forth. They had all these bypassed islands, so that's where we would keep those down. I went up one day that they wanted to work out some battleships, and that was off of Malei. Well, they said all the coastal defense guns were down, and so they we just going to pound it some more with battle wagons. See, with the heavy guns, and so forth. So, I went up to spot for them. You know? You tell them, help them, you give them signals. So, I went up to spot for them, and those coastal defense guns that were supposed to be out, retired those four battleships, those Nippers that were there. So, even though they were really beat down, they were there. They were bypassed, and so forth. But they fought very bitterly, even after they really had almost everything pounded. And they'd fix those guns.

They had said that, all the coastal defense guns were gone. And then, I think it was Nimitz came out with a communique and said that no coastal defense guns will be shown destroyed, until the tube is outside of the rivet. You can blow sand on it, and that's not going to do much for it. So, we did that. So, we hit these bypassed islands with bombs. Now, they had B-25s out there. The Army Air Corps had B-25s, and they could carry 3,000 pounds of bombs, altogether. Well, Chas Lindbergh, a little boy from the Little Falls up here, came out there. And there's three pylons underneath the Corsair. You can put a fuel tank on it, or you can put bombs on these three pylons. So, he put a 2,000 pounder in the middle, and a thousand pound on each arm. And took off on 3,800 feet around the coral runway. The point is, we could carry 4,000 pounds on the Corsair. Well, granted, only three bombs, but 4,000 pounds on that. And we were escorting B-25s, who could only carry 3,000. So, that seemed kind of stupid, especially because the 25s were slower. Anyway, we started. So then, we decided that we would do the bombing. You know? Why have that-- And we could dive bomb, and we were much more accurate. So then, we went back over these islands, and made sure that they were completely clobbered. Because, obviously, you can shell them, and so forth. But these Japanese, they fix their stuff up, and they're ready to go again. See?

**Overy** ([00:35:37](#)):

So, you were engaged in dive bombing too, huh?

**Pietz** ([00:35:39](#)):

Yeah. So, I had dive bombed and strafe. Sometimes, you'd catch the Japanese on their main fortified islands. They wouldn't all stay there. So, they would go on these Spitz from like an Atoll. Here's an island, then there'd be shallow water over it, so somehow, they could go from one to another.



So, we'd go up there at dawn and dusk, when they were changing the guard, sometimes. And sometimes catch them changing the guard. But we mostly bombed their coastal defense guns, and so forth. I hit one thing once, that was-- See, we would go up with about 16 planes. Well, I was lieutenant, so I was using the Fourth Division. So, when I came around, am I going to take my four planes in? There was so much smoke and stuff, on the thing in one day. So, I said, I think I'll take that all in the target. We'd all been dying to hit it because it was supposed to be a brothel. That's what intelligence had listed it. So, I dropped it in and, boy, it blew. It was ammo, and gas, and everything else. You never see too much smoke, and stuff. So, when we got back, some of the other boys tried to claim it, but we got the credit for that. That's a very small--

**Overy** ([00:37:17](#)):

Let me ask you, something I've always been curious about. What is the technique of dive bombing? Is it pure practice, or pure instinct? Or are there any kind of instruments that you have in the plane? How does that work?

**Pietz** ([00:37:36](#)):

Okay. The best way to dive bomb, and I did a lot of it. Not in a dive bomber, but from a fighter, is to roll over, and get as steep as you can. You see? So, you're as steep as you can. Okay. And you have a gun sight in front of you, which is the same sight that you'd use for your guns, for strafing. So, you can use that sight, and you figure your lead on that baby. And you just let her pull through, and then you release. Now, you're supposed to-- If, you have a thousand-pound bomb, you're supposed to pull out of a thousand feet, because the shrapnel can come up. But it can come up higher than that, too. That's what they say. A lot of people that have been in a lot of planes that were hurt, quite often that was from going too low. And getting some of their own shrapnel from the bomb. So, we would try to pull out by a thousand feet if you had a thousand-

pound bomb. That was kind of the rule. So, that way, you can hit it. Now, the other kind of bombing that we did, they had a lot of block houses. And they were kind of rounded. And the way we'd try to get those, let's say-- Well, they're about as high as this ceiling, but they were pretty much rounded, but they were concrete. And they were these kinds of emplacements. I'm not sure exactly what was in there, but we'd try to get those. And what we'd do with that, we'd use an eight-to-10 delay, which is a delayed type fuse. So, we'd get down low, and come in. Instead of dive bombing, we'd get down low, and then drop it. And then, pull up, and then turn in case it didn't stick. Otherwise, that baby follows you. So, you make it, you try and stick it in there. It's hard to make them stick.

**Overy** ([00:39:35](#)):

You've got to skip it in then, huh?

**Pietz** ([00:39:37](#)):

Yes. Well, yeah. You'd just be coming at let's say like, going right at that wall, or like that fireplace. And that'd be block house. Okay. You're down here, lower than that thing, you're right on the deck. And you drop it like that, and it'll of course, sail along. And then, you'd pull up to miss it, and make a hard right, or left turn. Because, if it doesn't stick, it's following you. And those were delayed fuse, you'd try to stick it in there.

**Overy** ([00:39:37](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Pietz** ([00:40:10](#)):

God, and they were hard to get, you'd take your chances. And put four planes on one, it would take about eight planes to get one to stick, usually.

**Overy** ([00:40:22](#)):

So, would you--

**Pietz** ([00:40:23](#)):

So, we did that kind of bombing, too. So, that kind of sight, you're just looking at it, and you're popping over. But the other one, you're using your gun sight to do it.

**Overy** ([00:40:23](#)):

Your gun sight.

**Pietz** ([00:40:32](#)):

Now, the real dive bombers-- Now, we're diving very fast, with the Corsairs. And you can put your wheels down, at half mast. We found that that wasn't very good, because you're shaking all over. It wasn't very good, but if you get on your target real early, you could control it, and pull out. And then, you'd come off your target, you're doing about 400 knots, when you come off. See, you're rolling right there pretty good, and you're pulling quite a few Gs when you come off it, but you could hit it. You could really be quite accurate with it. See, the B-25s, when they were there, it was fairly disgusting because they had one of those northern bomb sites, that were supposed to be sort of hot potatoes. And they'd try to bomb these little islands on the Atolls, while they're up at high altitudes, and they're flying level. And everybody doesn't have one of those sights. So, when the leader drops, everybody drops which meant that if everybody drops and it was wrong, they all go in the lagoon, and kill fish. That's all they would do, that sort of thing. We used to-- Later on, I was in a demonstration squadron, back at Quantico. Where, visiting firemen from foreign countries, and other dignitaries would come in to watch some Marine Corps demonstrations. So, we would do this, we'd do smoke bombing rockets, and all that sort of thing. So, we practiced every day, you can really get good if you practice every day.

You can really get very accurate. As a matter of fact, a lot of people didn't really believe that we were doing it, when we were doing these demonstrations. They felt that it was a fake, like they had a charge down below, but we had two people that were especially good there. You know? Ever heard of the word CEP, Circular Error Probable? Well, you get a CEP, like for example, I had a 15-foot, that's pretty good, after I was doing a lot of practicing. But we had two guys in the squadron, one had a three, and one had a four.

**Overy** ([00:42:54](#)):

Now, what is that exactly? What this is?

**Pietz** ([00:42:57](#)):

That is your average distance that you'll be from the bullseye, when you fire. You have a CEP for rockets, and a CEP for bombs, too.

**Overy** ([00:43:11](#)):

That's circular what?

**Pietz** ([00:43:13](#)):

Error Probable.

**Overy** ([00:43:14](#)):

Circular Error Probable.

**Pietz** ([00:43:15](#)):

Yes. See, the problem with the boys upstairs like McNamara, and those kind of guys. They'll take all the CEPs, and they'll figure out how many pilots it will take to get 98% assurance that you're gonna get this target. So, you add up the CEPs, and put it in a little computer, and comes out, tells you, "Okay. We send 23.5 planes," or whatever.

But the trouble is that doesn't quite work that way, because the first guys there has so much smoke, and that works if you can see. So, your CEP is figured on watching, and you could see the target. So, we sent a lot of big raids in World War II, and they did the same thing again in Korea. And I'll be damned, when we get to Vietnam, there they are with a mass rate again, see? But that's because the guys running the show, haven't been the ones who have been doing the dropping, let's say. You can do a lot better with about, four planes.

**Overy** ([00:44:21](#)):

Were there many Japanese planes around, when you were over there? Or had they pretty much been--

**Pietz** ([00:44:35](#)):

When we were at Nanumea, the aircraft that they had would be a Tora. And they would come down. We couldn't quite reach Tora, but we could intercept them, but they could reach us with Bettys, which is a twin-engine bomber. Well, they would come on moonlit nights, and I don't know what it was about the Central Pacific Command, but there wasn't a lot of thinking there. Or, maybe they didn't have the stuff, I'm not sure. But they would drop on us every moonlit night, that's when they'd come. They like to fly with the moon, the Japanese liked to have that. We knew they would come. They also had another problem, is you could always tell Japanese planes at night, because they're never in sync. You know how you get both engines humming so they're in sync, while it goes like that, they'd be out of sync, so you knew there were Nippers coming when they would come. But they would drop anti-personnel bombs down the runway. Well, that's not going to make any holes in runways. These are, we call them daisy cutters, they're just incendiaries.

They'd drop those down, so we were never damaged. Consequently, we got kind of complacent, too complacent about the bombing. So, when we picked up that big one that came in from Truck, like Roi-Namura, we were too casual about that. And we had quite a few casualties out of that. Well, I didn't even have the foxhole up there, in Roi-Namura. I'd dig one later, I thought. Well, that was pretty dumb. There weren't a lot of planes. They had another plane called Emily and caught that one off of a Spiff. I don't know how many people claimed that one, but it landed and went up on a coral sandbar, type thing. I think everybody that went by it, fired at it and claimed it. In our squadron a guy named Bulgy got two planes, and they were both Emilys. They were patrol planes. But we would try to go up, and intercept their patrol. I was trying to anticipate when they were coming on down. And at night, when they would come down at night, we were not really night fighters. We made some attempt, but nobody ever got a confirmed one at night. And we just usually sent up four planes to intercept them, when they would come down at night. And it didn't make much difference, they were dropping Daisy cutters anyway, so didn't make much difference. They were pretty much out of it. And then, when we got up to Macon, when we started doing this bombing on these bypassed islands, and everything. Well, they at the Navy had plastered Trucks so hard, that they didn't have anything they could fly to there, either. So, they were pretty well done, by then. And it wasn't so much longer after that, that the Marianas Turkey shoot came along. And that was pretty much the effect of this. By now, then the Navy's got F67s too, which they didn't like the Corsair for carrier work. So, they didn't bring many Corsairs up for carrier work. F6F was a pretty good plane too, just that it was slower than the F4U. And at high speeds the stick, it was like it was cement. So, in other words, if you're diving, if you're making a high side run on somebody with an F6F, you better get on early. Because, once you got

your speed off, you could never get it back on if you weren't on early, whereas with Corsair, you could do some maneuvering with it. I instructed later in both planes, in operational--

**Overy** ([00:49:00](#)):

What is the F6F, again?

**Pietz** ([00:49:02](#)):

That F6F is a Hellcat.

**Overy** ([00:49:04](#)):

Hellcat.

**Pietz** ([00:49:04](#)):

Yeah. It's Grummans.

**Overy** ([00:49:08](#)):

It looks a lot like a Wildcat, doesn't it?

**Pietz** ([00:49:08](#)):

Yeah.

**Overy** ([00:49:08](#)):

As I remember.

**Pietz** ([00:49:11](#)):

Yeah. This has a wider landing gear, and has a bigger engine, and is more of a stable airplane.

I'm trying to think of what the-- It looks a little like the North American P-47 on the Air Corps light. Somewhat like that, but it was a radial engine.

**Overy** ([00:49:29](#)):

Radial engine. Yeah.

**Pietz** ([00:49:31](#)):

See, the Navy stayed with radial engines, which was a lucky thing. They had a guy named Seversky who wrote a book called *Victory Through Airpower*. Remember that one? Well, Seversky did a lot of bad things, in that he came through with a lot of half truths. He said that inline engines would always be superior to radial engines, because they're more streamlined, so you can go faster. Because, the trouble with an inline engine, it has to be liquid cooled. So, any little tick, and your fluid is gone. And you're in the water, whereas a radial engine was a lot more rugged. It could stand up, a little bit. He had a lot of things like that. When he came up, that fighters couldn't fly far enough to support the bombers. The bombers would be long-range, they'd have to go by themselves. So, we came up with a V-system, or a firepower. We have a tail gunner, and a top gunner, and all of these sort of things. So, it'll be 17s, and it'll be 24s, and so forth. Went over there, and just lost thousands and thousands of people, because they had no fighters. Meanwhile, the simple thing is, put fuel tank on the fighter, which they finally figured that out. But Seversky had his way for a long time, the Air Force bought that book. Thank God the Navy didn't bring it.

**Overy** ([00:51:14](#)):

What was the best plane do you think, that there was over there when you were there?

**Pietz** ([00:51:16](#)):

Oh. No question, the Corsair.

**Overy** ([00:51:17](#)):

Corsair.



**Pietz (00:51:17):**

Yeah. Actually, the Air Force were pretty hot on the P-38, but P-38 was not very maneuverable. They had some of them over there, and some of them did okay. But anytime you get a twin tailbone, that's wrong, in my opinion. You need a more compact plane. So, once we got the altitude, we could beat in a dogfight, we could beat P-38's. With a Corsair, there's no comparison to it.

**Overy (00:51:56):**

Did the Corsair have any-- Was it an easy plane to fly?

**Pietz (00:52:00):**

Yeah. It was an easy plane to fly except for, at first, that problem. Now, one problem with it, on a carrier landing, I think as I remember, it stalled at about 73 knots. Well, to make your approach and not pull out too much wire, you had to come around about 76 knots, which is only three over. You'd like a little more cushion than that. But in those days, you had pretty good [inaudible 00:52:29], flag waivers. And they were good, the good ones could tell just where you were, and they could keep you, get you to come on a little stronger, and so forth. But the Corsair were marvelous airplanes, and it could take a lot of Gs. In other words, you could pull seven Gs on a Corsair, and not worry about popping rivets. Now, in an F4F, in the old Wildcat before that, well, you could pull 10, probably. You could really pull. It was a really strong plane, more compact, and so forth. As compared to later planes like the AD made by Douglas, which was the last prop single-engine plane that they thought was good, that was a Four G airplane. And so, you're talking about seven G's without having to inspect the rivets, is a pretty strong plane. So, with that, even though with the Gull Wing, and everything else, the construction there was good.

But I'd say, I thought it was an easy plane to fly. See, we all came into it from an F4F, which was hard, because it had a tendency to ground loop, and a lot of torque. And especially, they built-- Most of the coral strips out there were built the way, that the knot was out. Not, with thinking about where the predominant winds were. So, you had a lot of them. They built, and the way the Atoll would land, to where you could get a 35,000, or a 40,000 foot strip. And the Seabees would come in and build it, and with coral laid out. With coral. Well, quite often, you had some crosswind. And you were doing a lot of crosswind landings. So, with an F4F, that was not so good, but with the nice wide landing gear in a Corsair, it was just a lot easier to fly.

**Overy** ([00:54:31](#)):

Did you have any anxious moments when you were flying?

**Pietz** ([00:54:35](#)):

Well, I've taken about, I had three-- I guess, I brought in three airplanes that I'd got into, somehow into a field, not quite a little short, and so forth. And when I was instructing, I-- It was just before I got married, I was instructing British students. And as an instructor, the way you show your superiority over the students is in two-plane combat. So, no dog fighting, two-plane combat. And the idea is to get them-- The shameful way is to get caught. The worst that can happen, is in three turns, three scissors. If you can get on his tail on three scissors, he has trouble at the bar that night. So, I had a kind of a cocky British lad. So, I was going to try and get him in three turns, because I felt he needed a little coming down. Because you don't want to get-- Airplane drivers that are too cocky, die. That's one problem. So, it was so hot out in Florida, Jacksonville. That, I tended to fly stupidly with shoulder straps loose, belt loose. So, you can lift up your butt, and get some air under there once in a while. And I was trying to get him around, and then I was using the flaps. And I almost had him when I was on the third turn, I was shaking.

And I went like that, and he was able to turn just a little bit more. And I tried to kick it around, and I went into an inverted spin. Well, Corsair had a problem in spin characteristics too, with the Gull Wing. So, I had trouble getting it out of there, and I ruined the engine on that plane. And the whites of my eyes came through, but the other British guys saw it, and radios were pulled out, and everything. And all the oil came out over the cylinders, and so forth. But I was high enough, so I started going for Jacksonville airport there. And they flew off a map, and I was just going to have to put it in the river, because there were too many planes there. I wasn't able to get on the landing. I was just going to turn into the river and open up like the Red Sea. So, I hooked it in, I landed just a little short of the runway, and popped up with it. That was probably, the scariest time I had. I had a couple other. I had a plane once, where in diving that, and this was in combat. And we didn't know that much about exceeding the Mach of a plane. We just put them straight on down, and pull them up. I pulled it, I broke the tail, the rudders on the tail. They were still there, but they were bent. They're flexible, so I had to bring that one in. I could fly it, it could fly all right, but I couldn't get it very slow, because they were sort of flexible.

**Overy** ([00:58:04](#)):

[crosstalk 00:58:04].

**Pietz** ([00:58:04](#)):

Yeah. So, I tried it up in the air. I tried it, to see how much control I'd have, and how slow I could get with it before I got down to the lower altitude. And I figured I'd have to bring it in. So, I had to bring it in at about 110. See? So, normally, you'd come in at about 80 knots, or 75 knots, or something like that. So, I came in, and on this Morrison Pure Steel Planking, I come in. But I got her home, alright. And then, the skipper didn't know my problem, so he'd chewed me out

really good for the crummiest landing he'd ever seen. So, I had that one. And I had one other one that I did stick in. And I got it in a dirt field too, but that was the only three.

**Overy** ([00:58:53](#)):

Did you pretty much stay with the same bunch of guys when you were over there, the same squadron?

**Pietz** ([00:59:02](#)):

Once, I went into the Second squad, and I stayed with them. But you see, you're rotating them in, and out all the time. In other words, if they bring in six aviators from back in The States, and six would go home on top, and so forth. I think I had a 14 months tour the first time. I think down South Pacific, they had a little bit different thing, down in the Solomons.

**Overy** ([00:59:32](#)):

You were squadron leader then for much of the time?

**Pietz** ([00:59:32](#)):

I was a division leader.

**Overy** ([00:59:36](#)):

Division leader.

**Pietz** ([00:59:37](#)):

Yeah. Well, at first, I was a section leader, and then a division leader. Well, I got to be a first lieutenant pretty quick. I think in about five and a half months or so, I was a first lieutenant. And then, as people rotated out, you flew in, you start out tailing Charlie. And then, you fly wing on a section leader. And then, if he thinks you're alright, you go-- It didn't go entirely by rank, it wasn't entirely by rank. For example, you sometimes had captains flying, tailing Charlie, if they didn't really have the talent. So, there were some-- Most of those people didn't gripe about it. I

think, a famous football player, I think he was just a little bit muscled, but he just went smooth. He flew tailing Charlie, the whole one. I mean, he was a nice, have at it, little guy. So, he's a captain, they kept him tailing Charlie, because you have to be smooth. You need to be smooth for people to fly in. So, when you're flying formation, that guy needs to just keep the needle ball on centered, and fly smoothly, not jacking the throttle. And even then, there's some yawing, and seesawing even though you don't-- See, if you want to have your section leader, and your wing man believe that you are not fiddling with the trout, you put your hands up where they could see your hands. You don't fly, if you do it. If you put it down, he's sure you're moving.

**Overy** ([01:01:35](#)):

What kinds of things was there to do when you were on the islands, when you weren't flying?

**Pietz** ([01:01:44](#)):

Well, everybody's supposed to have a tan, so you lay on the beach, and so forth. I suppose to try to fix up where your living quarters are. You always carry your shower head with you. And you get 55 gallon drums, you paint them black, and catch rain water. So, you make eaves, and so forth. You try and fix up your place, where you would get the wood from crates, and so forth. And trying to fix up a strong back for your mosquito nets, and stuff like that. And you usually, got some kind of job in the squadron, too. When I was in 441, I was an intelligence officer, because they didn't have anybody. I didn't know anything about being an intelligence officer. I just filled out-- And so, they had the forms to fill out, and I would fill those things out. And not knowing very much about it. Then later on, they brought in intelligence officers. And they were also the people that would debrief the Hawks when they would come back. Well, that's how they brought in Joe McCarthy from Wisconsin, because Joe was a lawyer and so they brought him, they commissioned a bunch. I think they call them ABT officers, or something. They

commissioned these attorneys to debrief, because when you come back from a strike, it's pretty hard to sift out what really happened. Well, I'll give you a for instance, have you got lots of time?

**Overy** ([01:03:27](#)):

Sure.

**Pietz** ([01:03:28](#)):

Okay. When we'd go on a strike, one of the things that you want to find out is, how much are they able to fire out of there? How much anti-aircraft fire do they have. Okay. So, you're asking for how many puffs of smoke. You have black puffs of the smoke, from a heavy anti-aircraft gun. So, they ask how many puffs are coming. And Fred Sturdy was our lawyer that we had, he'd come in. We have this and they would ask the first guy, he says, "How much did you see?" Well, he might say, "Well, it was three puffs off to the right, when I came in." He says, "No, it's only one that I saw. Just, those three puffs over there." And the next guy he asked, he said, "Do you see anything?" He says, "Well, when I was turning in, there was some behind us. I think there may be seven, or eight puffs behind us." And he comes out, and he says, "I didn't see a thing. I never saw one puff the whole time." Then, there'd be a third guy, and so forth. So, he'd go through the whole 16 guys that were there. Then, he'd come to Freddie, who we called Ack-Ack Eyes. And he'd say, "It was so thick, you could walk on it." And no matter how much you kid him, and we nicknamed him Ack-Ack Eyes. He believed he saw it. You know? It's kind of like deer hunters, that shoot little girls off tricycles. They thought it was a deer. And I think it's because you're somewhat nervous going up there. You have probably an hour, an hour and a half up there, or whatever the time is up there, and you're thinking. And I think these people just see that. Like people see UFOs, they believe it. They believe that they've seen these.

And he thought, he would say, "You guys just don't see." He says, "I saw it. I still think you could walk on it." So, you'd have these attorney types there, which then would try and sift this out. And try to figure out how much of it, it really was. And any other things that they look for too, for intelligence.

**Overy** ([01:05:39](#)):

Did you feel as if you were pretty well taken care of, over there? That, you had everything you needed? Or?

**Pietz** ([01:05:47](#)):

Okay. Let me tell you, when I was with 441 at first, had a lot of men. We had a company of Marines, and a small group of Navy construction people, Seabee types, were there. And we had our squadron. I thought we were losing the war. I was sure of it, in fact, because we lose a plane, we never got a replacement. We weren't getting any replacement aviators, there. The supply ship that would come in with our chow, would zigzag in. And by the time it got to us, it seemed like they were always out of everything. We had salted tongue one time, that was our meat. We were wishing for SPAM at that time. I thought we were doing it. And now, these intelligence reports that would say, we take them back every so often. So, the first I knew that we were going to win the war, whether we had a chance, because you get a lot of rumors coming around. Everything was by word of mouth, by which you only heard about this carrier that went down. As far as we knew, the only carrier left afloat was the Saratoga. That was the only one that we-- Because, we had counted up the numbers that we had learned in blinkering, our carrier recognition, and so forth. So, we kind of figured that we really pretty much had it. We knew they're pretty strong up at Turawa, up that way. So, one day it was my turn to take back to a more of a headquarters group at Funafuti.

So, I strapped that F4F on my back. I'm tooling down there at about 10,000 feet, or something like that. Half asleep, and I'm carrying all of these reports that we've made out the best we could, without a-- As before, we had an intelligence officer. And I came to, all of a sudden, I looked and there were ships on the horizon. Every direction, jeep carriers, the small carriers, and everything, the ships. Well, I almost ground hooked. I mean, I got so excited to see this, because what we'd seen before was just nothing. So, I went in with my dispatch case, and saw the operation's officer. I said, "Have you seen the ships? Have you seen the ships?" He said, "Hell, that's nothing." He says, "That's only half of them. The rest of them are coming from Hawaii." So, that was how the American public had come through with building these ships, these transports, and all that sort of thing. It was just truly amazing, seeing this was-- I'm just trying to think what-- That would probably be about November of '43, I think. Is that the time we went in there? Or maybe February '44. I'm just not sure. But anyway, in a pretty short time, people had built a hell of a lot of ships. Now, a lot of people kicked about some of the stuff that Kaiser built. And some of the Liberty ships, and all of that stuff, but they did the job. So then--

**Overy** ([01:09:07](#)):

So, you were really isolated, then? And you weren't getting any news, from anywhere?

**Pietz** ([01:09:10](#)):

Well, we'd have a P-boat come through, once in a while. General Price would come through, once in a while. And we'd talk to him, and he'd been around the area. They had news from down at Guadalcanal, and some of the other places where guys were. Yeah. We were pretty isolated, but then when the fleet came through with these task orders, they did the job. And they would [inaudible 01:09:35].



**Overy** ([01:09:38](#)):

Did you lose a lot of people, quite a few people in your group?

**Pietz** ([01:09:42](#)):

No. We didn't lose that many. I think, the guys that lost them, were those Speedy-D pilots. SPD.

**Overy** ([01:09:51](#)):

Where the what?

**Pietz** ([01:09:53](#)):

We call them Speedy-D. The SPD pilots, the dive bomber guys. They lost a lot. I mean, the dive bomber is slower. It comes down on this dive, it was slower, less maneuverable. And I've seen sometimes where one guy got three in a row. Bang, bang, bang. Just like that. So, they took a much more beating than we did, especially with Corsairs, but we lost-- Oh, yeah. In that second squadron I was in, I think we lost about a half a dozen guys.

**Overy** ([01:10:34](#)):

From what causes, from combat, or from ground fire? Or?

**Pietz** ([01:10:35](#)):

Oh, no. From ground fire.

**Overy** ([01:10:37](#)):

Ground fire.

**Pietz** ([01:10:38](#)):

Yeah. Well, we lost Sullivan, Byrnes, Hawkins, Salem. We lost some. And this is Pimwat, we lost, you've got to like Pimwat. I guess, we lost more than that, maybe 10, maybe 10. But we had built up to 40, where we had only about-- The first squadron I was in, we had about 20, I think we had 22 aviators. And in this squadron here we built up to 40, because that is the new strength.

You're supposed to get 40 guys. It doesn't have any-- I guess, we lost about 10. But sometimes it was-- Black, and we lost him too. I forgot about him. Oh, here's two more. Here's Pimwat, here's Black. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, 10, maybe 11 guys. Yeah. Sometimes, we lost them in the weather, because you didn't really know what the weather was going to be like. Well, you get these weather squalls. In the words of the Thrasher, our squadron skipper, he would say, "Well, we hit one of those air tropical squall lines." Well, he says, "We'll try to get around it." He says, "If, we can't get around it, so we'll try to get over it." He says, "If, can't get over it. We'll get down off the water, and thrash on through." So, we called him the Thrasher.

**Overy** ([01:10:38](#)):

Thrasher.

**Pietz** ([01:12:34](#)):

Yeah. He used to play some music. Yeah. He was turned on out, too. He had been a football player with a twitch, so he said, "We'll thrash on through." So, sometimes you'd go into bad weather, you lost. That's how we lost Pimwat, who was in a flight at that time. He just pulled up, I don't know what possessed him. But the weather is pretty high under those tropical--

**Overy** ([01:13:08](#)):

He did what?

**Pietz** ([01:13:09](#)):

He just pulled up into the weather. I don't understand what happened to him. One guy, I can't remember his name and all, but he just went off the end of the runway. And crashed off the end of the runway on takeoff. I don't know whether it was the engine that quit on him, and all that, but he went into the reef. And that was it. Usually, the ground loops on landing. It'd just be bad for the airplane to have that, and with the guys, and so forth. Well, the others were from ground

fire. They were coming in low, and so forth. And then, the Japanese put something at you, there were some puffs. You know?

**Overy** ([01:13:57](#)):

One. Yeah.

**Pietz** ([01:14:00](#)):

No, we didn't get ours from the anti-aircraft. We got ours mostly from smaller stuff, is where we lost people. But those dive bombers are being slow up high like that. They were getting nailed with the anti-aircraft guns, pretty much. And then, further down in the southwest Pacific, down in [inaudible 01:14:29], and down there. They lost, they needed fighter escort, the Zekes were getting them down there. They were not sending, they just didn't have fighters, out of Turawa that could reach us. So, what they had was the Bettys, the same way out of Truck. And mostly Bettys, they had most of their fighter pilots over down in London or balling them through that area.

**Overy** ([01:14:58](#)):

As much of your time, when you weren't-- When you weren't flying, was it pretty boring?

**Pietz** ([01:15:04](#)):

Well, you read a lot.

**Overy** ([01:15:07](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Pietz** ([01:15:08](#)):

Yeah. They had little Time magazines that came about. This Wyatt's big, here's where it got it. And the people that mailed those out, they were pretty terrific. Head overseas, it was like, great for news. So, you kind of started with that. We read a lot, that you could. And as I said, you try

and fix up your quarters, tan. You try to improve your chow a lot, too. We did some fishing, and eeling. And we'd catch a thing, there was a long goosed out there. We call them Drunkers, but there's a long goosed out there, which you could catch off the coral reefs. Which is like a lobster, without claws. So, we would get those, you would eat pretty good with those. But when the tide was about on the halfway mark, halfway between high, and low tide. You'd get it on the way out, then you go out on the reef, and with the light you could catch those babies. And then, some of the guys would get eel. Eels, I don't know if you've ever eaten eel, but it's-- You'd pay through the nose for a smoked eel in Netherlands, I know. I haven't had any since then. So, we'd cook those. Then, we had two dive bombers that wouldn't, couldn't go on the carrier. They weren't carrier operable anymore, so they gave us two, so we used them for beer runs. And also, there were quite a few depth charges lying around the island. So, we'd take these depth charges, and take a Higgins boat out, drop the depth charge. Fill the boat with guys from the squadron, and then we'd dropped that depth charge, and then the fish come to the surface. And so, we'd eat pretty good that night. The flight surgeon would go over, and try and check which are poisonous, and which were not. I found out later that, that book wasn't all that good, but we lucked out. I mean, nobody died from poisonous tropical fish. So, we'd do that, so we had eel, and so forth. For a while, we-- Octopus are pretty good eating. But the chief, the native chiefs there, they liked the octopus for themselves. And so, they asked that we-- Said, that we not eat their octopus, and we stopped eating it.

**Overy** ([01:17:47](#)):

Did you have some contact then with the native peoples?

**Pietz (01:17:51):**

Yeah. They pushed off down to some of the-- Like when we were on the atoll, that you'd be on the island where you would-- Which, the large one, so you push them off down onto the lesser islands, now. And I really don't know how they were taken care of, except they're mostly eating coconut, and fish, and so forth. Now, we did pay for the-- Each tree that we knocked down, cost \$100. Through the British type of thing, and the Ellis, and Gilbert Islands. And they had, the British had pretty much the control about that. So, reparations were supposed to be given to them, as a hundred bucks a tree, I think. So, I don't know, I think they probably got some cans of stuff for that. I'm not sure of that, but they were pretty much left alone. They could, seemed to get along alright. When they were, later on, I've never forgotten this. When we passed control of the islands from the Navy department to the Department of Interior. And then, the idea was that we're going to train them, all these natives to be like us. You know? They'd dress like us, and all this good stuff. Well, the Navy had most-- And that was the kiss of death for the Navy not having control, anymore. One of them, I've forgotten what admiral it was, now. But he says, "For God's sake, let's leave them alone in their happiness." So, they could seem to get along alright, if left alone. I'd say. I know that some of those could do very well.

**Overy (01:19:52):**

And when the war ended then, you were still in the same islands?

**Pietz (01:19:56):**

Well, then I came back, I came back in '45. No, wait a minute. I came back in November of '44. That's right. In November of '44 I came back, and that's-- I had 14 months over by then, I remember that now. So then, I got married in February, Mary came back from [inaudible 01:20:20]. And I got married there, and I was sent to Jacksonville. And that was an F4U training

squadron, and there are all kinds of training squadrons all over Florida. Some F4F, some FMs which is the same thing, only it was made by General Motors instead of Drummond. Some F6F squadrons, two F4U squadrons, and they had some torpedo bomber, TBFs. That they trained in tough squadrons. TBF was a kind of bush group. So, I went back there to Jacksonville, and was in as an instructor, and training people. Well, we trained Navy, and foreign students in my squad. The squad that we had, and that was in F4U's. We were supposed to train French too, but they never would-- They said, they weren't advanced enough to fly the Corsair. So, we had them flying an SB2C, which was a man killer. You know? I could never quite understand that, but quite a few British students, too. So, they were a bit of a problem, they're somewhat different than Americans. So, being a Marine, and being a lieutenant in a Navy squadron, I got the British guys quite a bit. But I got along with them okay, because the basic problem was in American students. If you take off, and the gunnery ranges fall, you can shift. And brief another op in the air, and not have to go back. With the British students, they take off, and they'll say that you're going to do gunnery. And the ranges fall, those ships centered, or there're clouds over it. And they can't fire through the clouds, you're not allowed to do that, because some fishermen might be in there. So, the ranges fall, with the British students, if you try to change it, it'll take you the whole op to explain it. See? So, I finally learned that the way to do it, was to take their little knee pads, and I brief op one, op two. You know? Before we go, I can give you a ground briefing, before you go. So, I got along pretty well with them, they got where we wouldn't lose ops. And so, I'd say, "We shift to two," and so they'd peel off the first sheet. And go, and they're fine. Now, if that one isn't going to go, we land. There's just no use fooling with them, so you could get along. It was just harder to change an op, with the British.

**Overy** ([01:22:59](#)):

They weren't nearly as flexible, as Americans were.

**Pietz** ([01:23:02](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. That's one difference that I know of, as a group. So, you had then, Navy types going through. And some British guys going through, and so forth. So, I instructed there for, let's see, from, I got back, I had leave, and so forth. And so, I started instructing in about January, I guess. Then, the following April, about the following April in '46. Then I left, but I instructed there until the war ended, I think in August, and so forth. And they were closing all these bases, at that time. It's kind of interesting, at first they closed the one in Miami. And then, they closed one of the squadrons, not the one that I was in at Jacksonville. And then, they closed the one that I was in. So then, I went down to Melbourne, and started flying with Success, doing the same thing. And then, they closed the one in Melbourne, that's when the war ended. So then, I went over to Sanford, and they closed that one. I moved to Deland, and then they moved everybody to Miami, which is the one they closed in the first place. And I was there in '46 when I went to China, that was where I'd pick up the Japanese [inaudible 01:24:30].

**Overy** ([01:24:32](#)):

Tell me about that.

**Pietz** ([01:24:34](#)):

Well, if you ask some of the people that were there, they probably should have left the Japanese. We shouldn't have taken them out, because the Chinese did a poor job of running it, and so forth. But you had an awful lot of Japanese in north China. So, we went in with a third amphibious Corp, into north China. And headquarters were [Tinsin 01:24:59], and the third amphibious Corp was there. And then, you had, I think it was the Sixth Division. The Sixth Division was at

[Sentau 01:25:08], and the First Division was there at the headquarters in Tinsin. And I'm just trying to think what's the other division. There was one other division, two were scattered at [Ching Wang Tao 01:25:21], and [Paidaho 01:25:22], and Peking.

**Overy** ([01:25:23](#)):

Now, these were Marine divisions?

**Pietz** ([01:25:25](#)):

Yeah. Marine division. So, a corp had three divisions, and then we had one wing, one air wing. And I was, of course, in the air wing. And the air wing was at Tinsin, and we were stationed in the French arsenal, and the artillery regiment was there, too. With, Bigfoot Brown, he was at the French arsenal. The kind of interesting thing about the French arsenal, the Japanese put the American civilians, British civilians, and all allied type of civilians into camps. Prisoner or prisoner type of camps, where they put them in. But they left the French Foreign Legion at the French arsenal. Well, I was never so disillusioned in my life, to see the French Foreign Legion. They were--Oh, you've got to change?