

**Interviewee:** Brady, Henry G. Jr.  
**Interviewer:** Jack Sigler  
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**Sigler:** Good morning, Mr. Brady. Do you understand that this interview is being recorded?

**Brady:** Yes.

**Sigler:** Okay. Why don't you tell me what you did before you got in the service, how you got in, and then just go from there.

**Brady:** Well, I finished Columbia High School in '36, went to Clemson College and finished the ROTC program there in 1940.

**Sigler:** Columbia in California?

**Brady:** No, Columbia, South Carolina. I finished ROTC in 1940 at Clemson College, South Carolina. I entered the Air Force about two weeks later, went to flight training in Dallas, Texas at Love Field, and then became a flight instructor in California. When the war started in December of '41, I put in a request to go to fighters and leave the training command. Instead of sending me to fighters, they sent me to B-24s, which I didn't like at all, but I had to live with. We went into training at Wendover, Utah, and Pueblo, Colorado, and then in November of '42 we started overseas. First we went to Morrison Field at West Palm Beach, Florida, in November '42, and we were supposed to go on to North Africa. Then suddenly the Air Force had a change of mind and we were sent back to Louisiana to put in extra fuel tanks and changed our destination to China. Still flying B-24s. We arrived in Agra, India, and established a rear base there, then we went on to Kunming, China. I arrived in Kunming, China, in February '43. The 308th Group, of which I was a member as a squadron commander, was really sent over to China to see if a bomb group could supply itself. Because the Japanese had all the ports in China, all the supplies we got came over what they called the Hump, which was the flight between northeast India and China. So we were sent over to see if we could supply ourselves and still fly combat missions. Our group commander, fortunately for us, had been an aide to General Arnold for six years, and he kept in constant touch with him. So we were in good shape, because we had a group commander that had a lot of prestige, you might say. Arnold was the commanding general of the Air Force at that time, in Washington.

We had some pretty high losses. As squadron commander, I lost about half my squadron within about seven months.

**Sigler:** Where did you say you were based in China?

**Brady:** We had four squadrons. One was at Yang Kai, China; one at Kunming, China; and two at Cheng Kung, China. Cheng Kung was where I was located, and that was about thirty miles south of Kunming. Kunming was a big Air Force place – it was called China Air Task Force then, and General Chennault was the head of it. In about seven months, I lost about half my squadron, and the other three commanders were all killed in combat also. The Japanese concentrated on shooting down a lead airplane as much as possible, and I was just lucky because I was on every mission that we flew.

**Sigler:** A squadron was twelve aircraft?

**Brady:** Twelve B-24s, yes.

**Sigler:** And they carried a crew of what? Eight or nine?

**Brady:** Crew of about ten people, including the side gunners. We did a lot of sea patrol for Japanese shipping, and bombed seaports a lot. The sea patrol worked pretty well unless the Japanese were escorted by the Japanese navy. When we ran into the Japanese navy, that's when we had a pretty high loss rate.

**Sigler:** Wasn't that quite a long haul from your bases to get out over the South China Sea?

**Brady:** Well, we had bases out in east China. We had Kweilin, Heng-yang, Ling-ling, were bases out in east China. And we went out and flew out of those, and we covered from Formosa down to the Philippines, over to Hainan Island, over to Saigon. So we covered all that territory, you might say, bombing Japanese shipping. One of the interesting things we had – people often say they had mosquito netting to keep the mosquitos out – well, we were at a base that was 6,000 feet high and we didn't have any mosquitos, but we used the netting to keep the rats out. Just about all the old buildings particularly were infested with rats in China. And a lot of them were field rats, which are pretty big rats.

I stayed over there for sixteen months, flew about 107 missions, I think it was. Returned to the States for about eight months and then went back to China again. This time I was assigned to a B-25 group at Yang Kai north of Kunming as a squadron commander. Then when the war suddenly ended in August of '45, I became acting commander of the 341st Group, which had A-26s; we had converted from B-25s to A-26s. We took that group over to Europe, because the A-26 was the hottest bomber we had at that time. Later the A-26 became the B-26, but when we had it in World War II, it was called the A-26 – the Invader. It was really a well built airplane and very fast; faster than a fighter at low altitude. And some of the airplanes had sixteen 50-caliber guns fired by the pilot. You didn't have to be a good gunner, all you had to do was aim the nose and pull the trigger.

**Sigler:** Was that the one they loaded a .75 cannon in, or did that come later?

**Brady:** Well, we tried that in the B-25; it didn't work out too well. The pilots had a hard time hitting anything with it. I remember that, but it didn't work out too well for us anyway.

And suddenly the war ended when Tibbits dropped the atom bomb in World War II, and we took the group over to Europe and stayed there until the end of December in 1945. And that ended my World War II service. I went to MacDill Air Force base for about six months and then accepted a regular commission as a colonel in the Air Force Reserve and left and went back to my hometown. That was the end of that. Then I stayed in active reserve; a year after I got out, the Air Force offered me a regular commission which I accepted and went back in again. I went over to Korea in June of 1950 and commanded the 3rd Night Attack Group, which consisted of all A-26s. We were there when the war started. So we flew out of a base at Iwakuni, Japan, when the Korean War first started. Then we moved over to Kunsan, which is south of Seoul – known as K-8. We moved over there in '51. I stayed in Korea for a year and a half and flew fifty-seven missions in A-26s. I was reassigned to Eglin Air Force base, Florida, in testing when I left Korea.

So I had three combat tours and was in combat duty for three and one half years. Then I went to reassignment in testing at Eglin Air Force base, Florida. After Eglin I went to the Air War College and to the Pentagon and to Europe, and then retired after twenty-one years.

**Sigler:** You wanted to be a fighter pilot?

**Brady:** Yes, but I couldn't get out of bombers. I remember when I went to Sebring in June '42 to check out in B-17s, I went to the base commander and told him I didn't want to be in B-17s or B-24s, I wanted to be in fighters. He says, "Son, what has happened to you is due to what we call the "exigencies of the service. The only fighter you'll fly for now has four engines, so relax and enjoy it."

Any other questions?

**Sigler:** \_\_\_\_\_[??] or did they change those for you as well?

**Brady:** Well, no, they checked me out in B-17s first and then they sent me out to Davis-Monthan Field at Tucson, Arizona, to check out in B-24s. Then I was assigned as squadron commander in the 308th Bomb Group at Wendover, Utah, for training to go overseas. And that took place in fall of 1942.

**Sigler:** I've talked to a lot of pilots who flew B-24s and B-17s. Which of the two aircraft did you prefer?

**Brady:** Well, I much preferred the B-17 for several reasons. Number one, I think the B-17 was a much better built airplane. Also, it had a much bigger wing on it, so it had a much higher altitude capability. I think the B-17, as a pilot, was a much better aircraft. But it was an older aircraft. The B-24, they put together in a hurry during World War II. The B-17 was a much better built and more reliable aircraft.

**Sigler:** But you got B-24s anyway.

**Brady:** Yes. Well, one thing about the B-24s, and that is the bomb bay was twice the size of the B-17. So it was good for long range in the Pacific and in China because we put gasoline tanks in the front end and bombs in the rear bomb bay. We couldn't have done that on a B-17. And we could go as far as the Philippines from China with the extra tanks we had. The B-24 was good for very long range missions.

**Sigler:** You said when they deployed your wing to — was it a full group or a wing that deployed to China?

**Brady:** We didn't have wings in those days; we had groups. We were located – four squadrons at three different bases in China and then we had a rear base in India where we went to do engine changes and so forth, and that was at Agra, which is the home of the Taj Mahal. So we spent a lot of time in India also when we had to go over for engine changes. The food in China was pretty awful when we first got there, so we enjoyed getting back to India once in a while and getting a good meal.

**Sigler:** You said it was basically it was almost an experiment trying to see if you could operate a group out in China, supplied over the Hump. How were you supplied? Cargo aircraft or your own aircraft?

**Brady:** Well, we did a lot of transporting of fuel and bombs ourselves. We also got it from the transports. So we supplied some ourselves and some we got from transports flying the Hump.

**Sigler:** Did that include all your aviation gasoline?

**Brady:** Yes. We had to haul it in from India. You probably remember the Japanese had all the Chinese ports then. Everything that went to China went over the Hump. And that was one of the worst places to fly over in the world.

**Sigler:** You're actually flying over the Himalayan mountains.

**Brady:** Right. If you went the northern route, to go over you had to fly about 26,000 feet. Or you could go over the southern route and go down as low as about 16,000, but then you're flying pretty much over Japanese territory. If the weather was good, the Japanese would send Zeros up to intercept you. The only time we flew the southern route was when we had bad weather. The central route at 18,000 feet was the best.

[conversation about problems with telephone reception not transcribed]

**Sigler:** The northern route actually took you up near Mt. Everest and Anapurna, didn't it?

**Brady:** Well, on the northern route, the further up you went, the higher you had to go because you were getting closer and closer to Mt. Everest. So like I said, you had to be sure you had clearance. They had a northern route, middle route, and southern route. To be sure you weren't going to fly into a mountain covered with clouds, you had to go up to about 26,000 feet on the northern route. And that took a lot of fuel itself. So we tried to stay as far south as we could fly at lower altitude.

[telephone reception interruption]

**Sigler:** Okay, we were talking about flying over the Hump from your base in India to the bases forward. How often would you get back to India?

**Brady:** Oh, I would guess I'd get over there once every three months. We went there for engine changes, so we had a good reason to go back to Agra, our rear base. I'd say I went back about once every three months.

**Sigler:** In China then, you were flying both bombing and reconnaissance missions?

**Brady:** We were flying supply missions and bombing, not reconnaissance. We were trying to supply ourselves. But we got a lot of help, too. See, the reason General Arnold wanted to do that was that the B-29s were coming along, and he sent us over there with Colonel Beebe, who had been his personal aide for six years as a group commander, to see what difficulties we ran into in trying to be a bombing outfit and still supply ourselves.

**Sigler:** Oh, I see. Then he was considering placing the B-29s in China.

**Brady:** Yes, he was preparing to send the B-29s over and he sent this B-24 group over, which I was in, to see how it worked out with us. Well, Colonel Beede told him that for the 308th Group he thought it worked okay. But when the B-29s got over there, they had an awful lot of maintenance problems. I don't think it worked out very well for them at all. They had a lot of problems in China.

**Sigler:** Did they deploy B-29s to China as well?

**Brady:** Yes, they were over there; they were in northern China. And they were operating out of a rear base at Calcutta, India. They had an Indian base at Calcutta and they had a base up in northern China. I can't speak for B-29s because I was in B-24s and B-25s and A-26s. But I was not in the B-29. But we knew they were there. They were reassigned to the Pacific when possible.

**Sigler:** You switched to B-24s right at the end of the war?

**Brady:** No, I was in B-24s early in World War II, then B-25s, then A-26s which replaced

the B-25s.

**Sigler:** You switched to the B-25.

**Brady:** Yes, I switched to that when I had my second tour in China. And 14th Air Force gave me a choice of doing what I wanted to do, so I switched to B-25s because I knew they were about to convert to the A-26. And I knew that was a real fine airplane. And it was. I flew the A-26, the Invader, for ten years.

**Sigler:** In China, did you actually become involved in combat with those as well?

**Brady:** No, when I went back to China the second time, they were extremely short of gasoline. And I only stayed in China a short time, and took my squadron over to a base in northeast India to convert to A-26s. So my second tour I wasn't in China for long because the squadron that I commanded went back over to an airbase in India to convert from B-25s to A-26s. We were there when the war ended. We had just finished our conversion and were ready to go back to China and suddenly the war ended. You know, at that time we were thinking the war was going to last another year and a half. And Paul Tibbets dropped the atom bomb and that ended it. We were all greatly surprised.

Then we had a choice of getting on a ship and going back to the States or they asked for volunteers to fly over to deliver the A-26s to Europe, and the Pentagon had a hard time making up its mind. We pickled and un-pickled those aircraft three times before they made up their minds for sure that they wanted A-26s in Europe. They were thinking about giving them to the Chinese. The Russians, you know, were getting hard to deal with, and this was really a good combat airplane, A-26s. So they finally decided to send them all to Europe. So we departed for Europe in August of '45 and all the airplanes made it to Europe.

**Sigler:** They flew them to Europe?

**Brady:** We flew them to Europe. One group from India and one from China. Altogether, my recollection is 96 aircraft.

**Sigler:** What was the route?

**Brady:** Well, let's see if I can recall. We would go through India and go through Karachi. Then we went through North Africa. I remember being at Cairo. And then we went into Italy, either to Rome or Naples, and then into Europe – Germany. I'm sure we stopped at Karachi and Africa and Italy and then on to Germany.

**Sigler:** So you were in Europe for a while and then went back to the States?

**Brady:** Yes. We stayed there from late August until almost Christmas. They got us home by Christmas. That was what – about four months.

**Sigler:** You left the aircraft in Europe?

**Brady:** Yes, the aircraft stayed in Europe.

**Sigler:** Go back a little bit about China. When you were in China, did you have to work with the Chinese military closely or were you pretty much on your own?

**Brady:** We worked with them pretty closely. In fact, I had a group of Chinese mechanics, about twenty, who helped us in maintenance on the B-24s. Of course, the Chinese had a different idea of maintenance than what we had. If we dented a wingtip or something, we'd replace the wingtip. And the Chinese, they wanted to get hammers and straighten it up and put the same one back on again. We finally got them over that habit and they turned out to be a big help.

**Sigler:** So you got along pretty well with the Chinese?

**Brady:** Yes, very well. And we had a couple of Chinese officers that spoke English very well and were assigned to each squadron as co-pilots.

**Sigler:** The officers that were with you, were they flying officers or ground officers?

**Brady:** They were flying. We really didn't have any first pilots from China. We just didn't have the time or the fuel to check them out individually. But they flew copilot duty a lot.

[repetition by both of earlier information not transcribed]

**Brady:** The Air Force Association started in '46 or '47, so I became a charter member of the Air Force Association. You know, the Air Force was under the Army all during World War II. Although you could never tell it. Maybe at high levels they could.

**Sigler:** You want to talk about Korea now?

**Brady:** Oh, I can cover Korea pretty shortly; might as well do it right now. I went over to Korea — let's see, I was on orders to go to Korea in June of 1950, before the war started. I was slated to be in intelligence at Fifth Air Force headquarters. When I got over there, the Air Force looked at my record and said we need you more in 3rd Bomb Wing than we do in headquarters. So I was sent to the 3rd Bomb Wing. We had wings by then.

**Sigler:** And that was based in Japan or in Korea?

**Brady:** We were based in Japan at Iwakuni and had a rear base at Yakota up by Tokyo and a refueling base at Taegu, Korea. So I became air base group commander for about a month and then the wing commander made me the tactical group commander which I was very happy

with. The 3rd Bomb Group was really one of the best assignments I ever had. We converted to a night intruder outfit. So, except for the very beginning of the war, we flew all our missions at night.

**Sigler:** And you were still flying A-26s.

**Brady:** A-26s, yes. The A-26 is a great airplane but it wasn't built to fly in Korea. Korea had a lot of bad weather with a lot of ice. A-26s didn't have any de-icer boots or de-icing equipment. It was really built to fly in the south Pacific. So we had to get some flight suits that were heated. We left Japan in 1951 and moved to a base at Kunsan, Korea, which is K-8. That was a good move, because when we were at Iwakuni – when you flew missions at night, you flew ten hours. We would take off from Iwakuni in south Japan and go over and do some bombing missions, strafing the transportation lines at night — and of course the North Koreans are moving a lot of equipment at night. We were the only night outfit that was over there early in the war. Then at the end of that mission, we would refuel at Taegu, Korea, and fly a shoran mission, and we would go up to about 20,000 feet and select a target. This is just dropping bombs on radar. Then we would drop those bombs and go back to Iwakuni. By the time we got back to Iwakuni, we had flown ten hours.

**Sigler:** Could you carry enough fuel to stay up that long?

**Brady:** No, we refueled — I didn't tell you this – we refueled at Taegu, Korea. We went on a bombing mission first and then refueled in Korea and then went on a radar dropping mission.

**Sigler:** And Taegu and Kunsan were actually in Korea.

**Brady:** Yes, Taegu was in South Korea, about the middle of South Korea. So we were very glad when we were able to move over to Kunsan in Korea, because it was then just a short distance to North Korea. And one of the frustrating parts of the Korean War was that when the Chinese came in, we could see massive buildups in China north of the Yalu River. Even after they entered the war, we weren't permitted to go over and bomb them at all. We knew they were building up, but MacArthur didn't think they were going to cross the Yalu, but they did. And then he was not permitted, however, to bomb China. People forget it was a UN operation – United Nations. And I guess Truman felt like he had to do what the UN wanted, so we weren't allowed to do any bombing north of the Yalu River, even after the Chinese were in North Korea. That was rather frustrating, frankly.

[political observations by both parties not transcribed]

**Brady:** So any other questions that I can answer for you?

**Sigler:** What would you say was probably the most interesting experience you had in the

wartime, either military or personal?

**Brady:** I suppose the most personal – the good time that I had was after World War II ended and we went over to Germany. We spent a lot of time in Paris on leave [chuckles]. The war's end was the best part of the war that I can remember. I really enjoyed it, because once we got checked out on the Metro and you could go anywhere you wanted to, I spent a lot of time at the Louvre and really enjoyed it, as well as Moulin Rouge and the Champs Elysees. Then, back to the US by ship in December 1945.

End

PS. We didn't say much about actual combat missions, some very interesting and some very deadly.