

INTERVIEWEE BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Name: Vernie Francis Larson M/F: male

Address: 1312 Nocoosaka Trail Anniston 36207

Phone number(s): 835-2700

Approximate age or date of birth: June 15, 1925

Mother's name: Oredia Matilde Larson

Father's name: Ferring Larson

Places lived and when: Wis. ILL. AL.

Education: Un. Wis

Religion: Meth

Business, political and social memberships (past and present): EIK Club, Shrine
Larsons rest.

Present occupation: Flight Instructor. Retire Air Force

Former occupations: Resturant Manager

Special Skills: Pilot, Cook

Major Accomplishments: ~~PI~~ Air Force Pilot

National Events in which interviewee has participated: WWII

Local Events in which interviewee has participated: EIKS

National born U.S. citizen? Yes/No Naturalized Citizen: Yes/No

Country from which he/she emigrated: _____

Documents, photographs, and artifacts which are in the possession of the interviewee:
none

Individuals recommended by the interviewee who might be candidates for an oral history interview: Beth Aiken

Additional information: _____

Gift and Release Agreement

We Vernie Larson and Roy Bowden
Interviewee (print) Interviewer (print)

do hereby give and grant Jacksonville State University, Oral History Archive, all literary and property rights, title, and interest which we may possess to the audio or video recording(s) and transcript(s) of the interview(s) conducted at

Vernie Larson's home in Anniston.

on the date(s) of 4/2/96

for the oral history collection being compiled by Dr. Marshall.

Vern Larson
Interviewee's Signature

Date: 4/2/96

Address 1312 Nocoseka Trail
Anniston, Al. 36207

Phone 205-835-2700

Roy Bowden
Interviewer's Signature

Date 2/24/96

Address 500 White Gap Rd
Jacksonville, Al. 36265

Phone 205-782-2802

Roy Bowden

Oral History Project

Interviewee Name and Address

Vernie Francis Larson

1312 Nocoseka Trail

Anniston, Al. 36207

My interview was with Vern Larson ^{about} and his experiences during World War II. World War II started when Vern was ~~seventeen~~. At the start of the war, Vern was a sophomore in high school. He remembers his mother getting a job at the military base near their home. His father ran a bar, Vern spent a lot of his time training here. This was all during the depression ; life was very hard. Even though his mother worked, and his father ran a bar; the neighborhood store extended their line of credit ,so they could eat. Without the help of the store, they would have gone without food. His father sold beer at his bar before there was ice. The only way to get ice was to harvest it out of the Mississippi River. This turned into a village project. Between the restaurants and bars, the town built ice shacks. They packed the ice in sawdust; the ice lasted until the next winter. } sent
street

After graduating high-school, Vern knew that that he would be drafted. Vern decided to join and enlist in some military force. Vern wanted to become a pilot. He was first recruited by the Navy. Vern was "washed out" by the Navy's medical physical. The navy asked if Vern had experienced any headaches. Vern being honest, said that he had experienced headaches; they automatically thought Vern had migraines. As he walked out of the Navy recruited ⁱⁿ building, a } income
part block away was the Army recruiting office. After learning his lesson the hard way, Vern did not tell the Army recruiters about any headaches he had ever experienced. This was the start of Vern Larson's flying career. } he

The Army sent him to take his physical in Fargo, North Dakota, To start Vern on his way to become a pilot. After basic training, he tried his luck at becoming a musician. He traveled around the country until he was 18. Vern's mother called and told him about a letter for him telling him to report for active duty. His next trip was to Miami, Florida for basic training. This did not sound all that bad to Vern because he was thinking it would be fun to go to Miami. All this changed when he showed up in a wool suit in the middle of the summer. *uncomfortable sent*

Vern never saw any combat. The Army expedited whoever wanted to go by offering a ranking of Master Sergeant to whoever went. Only two out of 300 of the Army liked the offer. These men had previous enlisted time. At that time Vern was a second lieutenant at the age of 19, at which in this day and age is unheard of, because a college degree is required. The way the men got their ranking was after basic training the Army sent the men to any college they wanted in the United States. Vern decided and picked Wittenberg college in Wisconsin. The Army kept them there for four or five months supposedly giving them a college education. After the short time in college, they were sent to San Antonio Aviation Cadet Center, this now called Lacklin Air Force Base. This is where their flight training started. Because of the war, the pilot schools were full and this prolonged their training. At this particular training school, he spent six months. From training he was sent to Quaro, Texas, to start his actual flight training. The men flew PT-19s, a low wing, single engine plane. In order to start the plane, one of the flight crew had to spin the prop until it had enough enersha to chance. He spent four months in Quaro. Vern was then sent to Grengo, Texas, where he flew DT-13s. The DT-13 was a much larger airplane. Vern spent another four months here training in arobatics and confidence maneuvers. This ment ,after they where done with these maneuvers, the men would be confident and able to fly under any situations. *prop?*

After completing arobatic training , Vern moved to an advance training. In advance training Vern was taught to fly twin engine planes. Again he was training for another four or five months. The Army however was not finished with him yet. Vern graduated from advanced training and was on the move again. This time the Army sent him to Eagle Pass, Texas, to log time in the fighter planes. The AT-6 was the Army's fighter plane before World War II.

Vern was on the move once more. The Army sent him to Florida to learn to fly the B-17. The B-17 was the newest bomber plane the Army had. He went through his months of ground school to learn the new technology that the bombers were equipped with. The Army was safe^{ly} conscious and never aloud^{ly} the pilots to fly in bad weather. The pilots would always have to wait for the clear. One day a hurricane was coming. Vern and his roommate had to fly a B-17 to Dallas. They had never flown in that kind of weather. They where carrying four other fighter pilots with them. The other pilots had just got back from England and could not believe that these "two kids where flying this huge plane." After departing, the primary instruments started going crazy because of the lightening. Vern and his roommate started getting confused and skeptical. Vern said that they would not have made it with out the other pilots taking control. Vern and his roommate took the train back from Dallas

Graduating from the B-17 flight training, he went to Montgomery to a B-29 co-pilot school. This was the first tricycle wheel plane. The plane had a wheel in the front , instead of on the tail. Vern mentioned that, after the complicated check-list, this was the largest and easiest plane flown. For Vern, life in Montgomery was great. There was an officers' club that the ladies loved to attend.

Vern had been discharged from the Army in 1945, after Japan had surrendered to the United States. He remembers that day very well. Vern was

at the Officers Club when the news came. He mentioned that a General there was thrown into the pool. After his discharge, Vern returned to college at the University of Wisconsin. He spent two years there focusing on dentistry. The only way he could continue his studies was to go to a dental school. The only dental school in Wisconsin was Marquette. Marquette only had openings for seventy-eight students. Vern decided to open a restaurant, while he waited. He did not know that the restaurant was going to be his next career.

Vern bought a little restaurant that seated only twenty-four people. The man he bought the restaurant from was supposed to stay and teach Vern how to cook and run the restaurant. The partner took the money and ran, leaving Vern to teach himself. This was on the busiest day of the year and he had no clue how to do anything. It took him all morning just to learn how to make eggs, not to mention lunch was rolling in. After a few lunches, Vern learned the business work. A Kroger went out of business across the street; Vern opened a nice restaurant there. This new restaurant took off very well. Vern did most of the cooking. After thirteen years of cooking, Vern received a call from Truik's Field wanting to know if Vern wanted to go back on flying status. Vern decided he missed flying.

Vern went back to the military. When he got back, he had not been in a plane for three or four years. Vern was slightly rusty. The Army gave him very little time to adjust to being back in the pilot's chair. They started him off in the C-45, which was the most planes Vern had flown. Vern spent two or three years at that field before realizing he wanted to fly helicopters. The Army offered him a spot in Rhino to go through helicopter school. For Vern, helicopter school was very different and harder than flight school. While in training, Vern flew a Canadian ski team in Lake Tahoe. When they first built the ski lodge, without him knowing, Vern was there to complete his survival training course.

Vern and his team of six were drooped off in the woods for ten days with a piece of a parachute and a live rabbit. The parachute was what they would have if they were shot down and hunting season had not started. That was the reason they were given a rabbit. The first couple of days they all joked about eating the rabbit. The men named it and played with it. The last day the commanding officers played the enemy and sent them over a mountain to find the extraction spot. All the men were captured and stripped. After they had finished the exercise, Vern had lost fifteen pounds.

After his helicopter training, he became to work in the operations office. He was again in training to take over his boss's position. He spent time training for this position. Because of Vern's age, he was grounded from being a pilot. The Army gave him a choice between going into radar or becoming an "MP", military police. He decided on becoming a military police. He installed a security system for a Nuclear Installation. When Vern started designing the system, there was only a fence surrounding the building. He later put in motion detectors, which worked well. This was the end of Vern's military career.

Once out of the Military, Vern got back into the restaurant business. He worked as his wife went back to school. When she graduated, she was hired on as an accountant at a big company in Huntsville. Vern then gave up the restaurant business to become a flight instructor. His wife was very good in her field and was hired away from her job to a company here in Anniston and that is how he ended up here. Vern now teaches students how to fly out of Anniston Aviation.

*Interests
interview*

*Went on (a long)
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