

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Ralph Sims

COLLECTION: 4700.0827

IDENTIFICATION: [1916 - 2009] Member of the Army Air Corps during World War II

INTERVIEWER: Adele Foster

SERIES: Military

INTERVIEW DATES: July 3, 1997; July 4, 1997

FOCUS DATES: 1942-1945

ABSTRACT:

Session I

Tape 1187, Side A

Description of Ralph Sims' family; how the Simes and Kittredges came to live in Donaldsonville; trip to Hollywood where he spent a summer and one school year; college "career", one year at University of the South(Sewanee) and a semester at Louisiana College; realization that the Great Depression has affected his family; reasons he attended University of the South; differences between Donaldsonville and Hollywood; religious composition of Donaldsonville; Sims family was Episcopalian; discussion of heritage; Sims' mother's training as a secretary and subsequent work at Texas and Pacific Railway; work at Hill Stores grocery in New Orleans; work at Greyhound; meeting wife Eliza Bowie; work at WJBO radio in Baton Rouge; meeting Charles Manship, Sr., wife's work at Ethyl Corporation; promotion to program director at WJBO; how Sims learned of the attack on Pearl Harbor; enlisting in the military(Army); waiting to be called to duty; training to be a pilot in the Army Air Corps and becoming a tail gunner; Sims' group was based in England(flew B-17); keeping his wife informed with newspaper clippings; recollection of his first mission and his last mission; a mission into Ukraine; opportunity to do a broadcast from London the United States on the radio

Tape 1187, Side B

Going to London while on leave; visiting with Charles Manship, Sr. in London; staying in Charles Manship, Sr.'s suite at the Dorchester although Sims was enlisted; experiences during bombing in London; hotel service in England; specific story about a bombing attack on London while staying at the Mayfair; a mission when the plane was badly damaged and almost didn't make it back to England; becoming fatalistic about missions; waiting for the final mission (32); experience of being an older member of a flight crew; coming back to the United States and training for B-29; transferring to Alexandria Army Air Base in Louisiana; when he heard that the Japanese had surrendered; birth of Sims' first daughter; traveling back from Europe on the Nieuw Amsterdam; Jack Gremillion, former Attorney General of Louisiana; living and working in Baton Rouge while

trying to find a house for his wife and child; feelings about use of the atomic bomb on Japan; leaving radio in 1953, finding a job with Crawford Corporation; involvement in the development of a town, Crofton, MD; acquiring job with Fidelity National Bank(Hibernia) in order to be closer to home; discussion of daughters, Ethlyn, Elizabeth, and Dorothy; discussion of grandson; discussion of current home in Westdale Terrace; wife, Eliza's work outside of the home

Session II

Tape 1188, Side A

Discussion of B-17 and B-24; detailed the conditions in a B-17 and the crew positions; hitting bombing targets; first mission: to bomb Berlin; carrying escape kits; instructions on how to talk with Russian soldiers on mission to Ukraine; close relationship with flight crew; D-Day briefing and missions; accidentally bombing own troops; bombing procedure; D-Day weather; reporting of events in *Stars and Stripes*; composition of flight crew; Clark Graham, member of Sims' flight crew contacting him; not interested in veterans groups; motive for enlisting in military; military decorations; used cigarettes to barter; opinion of German soldiers;

Tape 1188, Side B

Parallels with Nazi philosophy and David Duke; retirement activities, theater and Rotary Club; Rotary Club: what it is, experiences in the international organization and local uses; opinion on role of US military internationally

TAPES: 2 (T1187, T1188)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 2 hours, 30 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: Total in both sessions - 96 pages

T1187 - 57 pages

T1188 - 39 pages

RESTRICTIONS: None