



## Robert A. Bloomfield Oral History

### Date

April 16, 2019

### Primary Maker

Robert A. Bloomfield

### Medium

MTS, PDF

### Description

Robert A. Bloomfield served in the U.S. Navy as a fighter pilot during World War II, from August 1942 to October

1945. Bloomfield initially flew Grumman F6F Hellcats with Fighting Squadron six (VF-6) aboard USS Independence. He then continued flying with VF-6, first aboard USS Essex, and then aboard USS Intrepid. Bloomfield served aboard the aircraft carrier USS Intrepid (CV-11) from January to March 1944. He later joined VF-85, flying Vought F4U Corsairs aboard USS Shangri-La. The Intrepid Museum recorded his oral history interview on April 16, 2019. See transcript for complete interview. Below is a summary: Bloomfield began his interview by discussing his family and upbringing in Larchmont and East Hampton, New York. He then explained how he joined the Navy and passed the test for color vision deficiency (color blindness) even though he had difficulty distinguishing colors. The interview then shifted to flight training. Bloomfield described pre-flight school, particularly the physical training, as well as the various E bases, or elimination bases. He recalled his time in Hutchinson, Kansas, flying Stearmans; his time in Corpus Christi, flying SNV Valiants; and his time in instrument training. Bloomfield then noted fighter school in Kingsville, Texas, where he flew the SNJ. He also recalled Green Cove Springs, Florida, where he flew the F4F Wildcat and experienced Field Carrier Landing Practice, and Glenview, Illinois, where he made eight takeoffs and landings on the USS Wolverine. Bloomfield then backtracked, discussing the time his girlfriend visited him in Green Cove Springs and explaining how they got married. As the interview continued, Bloomfield recalled his trip to the West Coast, where he boarded the oiler USS Kaskaskia and made his way to Hawaii with four other pilots. He also stated that, during this trip, the pilots learned the oiler was carrying four Hellcats, so he asked the cargo officer to remove the tarps covering the cockpits, allowing the pilots to study the aircraft. Bloomfield then recounted some of his initial experiences with VF-6, such as: the raid on Wake, catapult launches, and his recollections of Independence, including the time Independence was struck by a torpedo. He also explained how being torpedoed had led to himself and eleven other fighter pilots spending time on Tarawa before they went aboard Essex and eventually Intrepid. Bloomfield noted that in six months, essentially the same group of pilots were on three different carriers: Independence, Essex and Intrepid. The interview shifted to missions flown from Intrepid. Bloomfield stated that their first mission was in the Marshall Islands, and their targets were the islands of Roi and Namur. He then discussed the strikes on Truk and explained how he dropped a provision pack to George Bullard, the

squadron's executive officer, who was shot down. Bloomfield also recalled the torpedo that struck Intrepid, before noting the carrier's transit to Eniwetok, Pearl Harbor and finally San Francisco, where the pilots had a 30 day leave prior to joining VF-85. Before discussing VF-85, Bloomfield recounted two stories from the war's end: landing on enemy airfields with another pilot, and participating in the flyover of the USS Missouri. He also noted one memorable leave when he returned home and was contacted by public relations in the 3rd Naval District. Bloomfield explained that he was informed he was the youngest pilot they ever had back in the 3rd Naval District, which led to him being interviewed by NBC's nightly news and being given the opportunity to experience various forms of entertainment on multiple nights. Bloomfield also recalled a trip to the Grumman plant, where he and a number of other pilots spoke to the workers over the PA system in order to encourage them, saying how much they loved the Hellcat. The interview then shifted to VF-85. Bloomfield discussed his time flying at Naval Air Stations Norfolk and Atlantic City, where the squadron learned they were going to receive Corsairs. He then noted Shangri-La's shakedown cruise and the trip to San Diego, where the squadron received F4U-1Cs, which had 20 millimeter cannons. Bloomfield described using these weapons in combat. He also recalled his ride in a breeches buoy, which occurred when the entire air group was transferred from Shangri-La to USS Long Island. Bloomfield then provided some additional stories from his time aboard Shangri-La. Some of these stories focused on the commanding officer and the executive officer. Bloomfield also discussed the eight 5" rockets the Corsair could carry, recalling the time he fired those rockets at a small ship. He also described a night carrier landing, which led to a brief recollection of a landing he made as a civilian pilot after the war. Bloomfield then noted one of his squadronmate's particularly interesting flights. As the interview continued, Bloomfield discussed leaving the Navy and the end of the war. He noted some of the pilots who decided to remain in the Navy after the war had ended and recalled how his friend was shot down just before the war's end. Bloomfield explained that his friend was the last pilot in the squadron to be shot down. The pilot was in a POW camp for two weeks before the war ended and he was fortunately returned to the ship. Bloomfield also noted when they were told to withdraw away from Japan. He later learned this was when the atomic bomb was dropped. As the interview came to an end, Bloomfield described how the squadron's complement had eventually changed, explaining that dive bombers were removed and additional Hellcats or Corsairs were brought aboard in order to form a bomber-fighter squadron (VBF). He then expressed his appreciation toward the Museum for traveling to his home and conducting the interview. Extent: 17 media files, 46 page transcript

## **Dimensions**

174 minutes