

Summary of Interview

April 28, 2003

Subject: Roland L, Sargent, Major, WWII

Major Roland was a B-17 pilot He had always wanted to fly. While he was in college, the government started a pilot training program. In order to participate in this program you had to apply for military service. In June 1941 Major Roland graduated from college and started hit army aviation training. During training the morale was high and everyone was there by choice.

Primary flight training was held at Parks Air College in St. Louis, Illinois. The government used this civilian facility. The tea week course was run like the military. Next came bask air training at Randolph Field in San Antonio, Texas. Here they used military pilots with turning planes. These planes were referred to as "Two-Place" and were single engine planes, (totally unlike the B-17's which they would eventually fly). At Brooks Field the last, advanced training occurred. He then graduated with a commission as 2nd Lieutenant and was married in April, 1942.

In February, 1942 Lt. Sargent was assigned to a tactical bomber group at McDill Air Base in Florida. They trained with the B~17's. This was a critical time in the war after Pearl Harbor. Colonels and Majors were being used as pilots. At this point the younger pilots were being readied for combat.

During the training in Florida, they used long, standard size runways. Later the actual field conditions would be short runways and sand. This phase of advanced training involved anti-sub patrols. The B-17's carried four 500 pound bombs.

Lt Sargent went on to Bovingdon, England which was 25 miles south of London. The group settled in waiting for their equipment to arrive by boat. Oct. 9, 1942 was the beginning of the 8th Air Force bombing history. All operations occurred in daylight and targets were air fields, factories, and industrial facilities. The B-17's always flew in formations during the bombing runs with usually twenty planes in a formation.

Mr. Roland Sargent continues his interview on video tape on the same date.