

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Vasil (Bill) Klyasheff

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Veterans Remember Oral History project

Interview # VR2-A-L-2015-029

Vasil (Bill) Klyasheff, a World War II veteran who served in the Air Force in the European theater as a fighter control, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Veterans Remember* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: August 21, 2015 Location: Granite City, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Pete Harbison, Coordinator, IHPA State Historian Program

Transcription by: Bonnie Bruns, ALPL volunteer

Edited by: Audrey Sloan and Jan Culp, ALPL volunteers

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The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Vasil (Bill) Klyasheff, *Veterans Remember*, VR2-A-L-2015-029

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Vasil (Bill) was born in November, 1923 in Granite City, Illinois. Bill's grandparents were murdered in present day Macedonia by Turks in 1892. His father's life was spared and he was raised by his uncle. The family migrated to Madison, Illinois in 1906. His given name is Vasil in honor of his slain grandfather.

Bill was working in a steel mill as an office worker when he was drafted, and entered the US Army on February 9, 1943. After basic training, Bill was assigned to the 321st Fighter Control Squadron of the U.S. Army Air Forces. The unit later merged into the 327th Fighter Control Squadron (FCS). A quote in the October, 1944 *Air Force Magazine* describes the mission of a Fighter Control Squadron "the task of directing the air war, the tactical support of ground troops, is a complicated one. Fighter control...constitutes the heart of air support operations. ... The chief responsibility is to direct our planes against enemy attack and to aid our crippled aircraft in returning home."

The unit was stationed in England before deploying into France June 9, 1944, landing at Utah Beach. The 327th FCS entered Paris the day after French forces liberated the city and Bill received a hero's welcome. The 327th continued into Belgium and then participated in the Battle of the Bulge. Upon reaching Weimar, Germany, the unit learned of the Nazi surrender. After a harrowing trip to the Buchenwald Concentration Camp, the unit returned to France where they were stationed at Camp Detroit, awaiting deployment for the invasion of Japan. The nuclear bomb attacks forced the Japanese to surrender ending WWII. Bill was decommissioned on December 8, 1945 at Camp Grant in Rockford, Illinois. Bill returned to Granite City and worked as a civil servant for the Air Force, retiring in 1978 at age 55. He then moved into teaching at Belleville Area College, where he taught for ten years.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Fighter Control Squadron; European Western Theater during WW II; liberation of Paris; combat in Belgium during WW II; Battle of the Bulge; Buchenwald Concentration Camp;

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