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INTERVIEW WITH BILL OHRMANN

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B: Well, it was in New Guinea, and northern Australia part of the time. Like I told you, that's been a long time ago, you know.

(Discussion about being in the plane and guarding them.)

Well, we'd just spend our time there writing letters and listening to Tokyo Rose.

C: You said the planes were very far apart.

B: Yes. They were in little clearings in the jungle that they dozed out and made revetments, if you know what that is--they're horseshoe-shaped banks of earth that the planes were in so that a bomb would have to hit them direct to hurt them because if it hit outside that revetment it would just go against that dirt. And they were scattered half a mile to a mile apart in the jungle. Just on account of air raids.

C: This was in New Guinea?

B: Yes.

C: What year was that?

B: 1943 and 1944.

C: Did you talk about her amongst yourselves?

B: Well, just the joking. We didn't take her serious. She might have thought she influenced us. They'd play that American music and she'd come on and say, "Well,

to you boys fighting there in the jungles, some 4-F back home is taking your girl out," and stuff like that. And we'd just laugh about it the next morning, and say, "Did you hear Tokyo Rose last night?" And the guys that were lucky enough to hear her they would tell about it, you know. It was just an entertaining program for us. Nothing sinister at all.

C: So, when you said "lucky enough" . . .

B: Well, we were on guard duty those nights. The ones that weren't on guard duty. There was no radios that could pick up short-wave. I don't know of anybody that had any radios. There was no rule against it that I know of, but we just didn't have them--we had to travel light.

C: Did you look forward to doing guard duty?

B: Kind of for that one reason, yes, that we could listen to mainly Tokyo Rose because I can't think of any other stations that anybody listened to. They were hard to pick up anyway, the short-wave radio.

C: Did you hear that she was called "Tokyo Rose" or did she call herself something else?

B: No, she'd say, "This is Tokyo Rose." And she talked real nice, you know. She was far-removed from the war, you know, and I suppose her propaganda was written by other people, but she could put it over pretty good. But nobody took her serious.

C: Did you like her music, was that what it was?

B: The music, yes. It was American music. They had all the modern American songs, and singers and bands.

C: What about the news, did she give news on her program?

B: Yes, I think she did. Yes, I think she did give news, if there was any good news from her side. About that time, though, we were creeping up the coast, taking one place after another, and the news wasn't too good for them. Of course we knew that.

C: Do you think she slanted it?

B: Oh, yes, sure. Sure, she'd slant the news. And she'd tell us things--probably news from their side that we'd never hear about either.

(Talked about "Guinea Gold" newspaper.)

That was really the only news we got, from her and that little "Guinea Gold" paper. Lots of rumors, you know, but . . .

C: Did you have any idea what she looked like?

B: No idea whatsoever. No.

C: How did it make you feel to listen to her?

B: Oh, about like I feel now, listening to you. Just interested. It was no . . . there was nothing sinister about it, it was just a radio program. Of course we knew she was on the other side, but . . .

C: So she did not succeed in demoralizing you.

B: Oh, no. Heavens no. Not in the least. If anything, she was kind of a bright spot.

C: You looked forward to hearing her?

B: Yes, sure!

C: (Question re his describing verbally for the radio program the image of his sitting in the cockpit of the plane on guard duty and writing and listening to Tokyo Rose.)

B: (Talked about listening through earphones to Tokyo Rose as much as they could.)

C: Were you engaged to be married at the time?

B: No, uh, uh.

C: I think what she did was she tried to work on people who left their wives at home.

B: Definitely she did that, yes. Yes, she tried to make the boys feel sorry for themselves, but I don't think anybody did.

C: Did you know anybody else who was depressed by her?

B: Can't think of a single person who ever was depressed by it at all, because, like I say, in the mornings we'd compare notes as to what we'd heard and just laugh about it and say, "Well, she was in good form last night," and things like that. Those kind of programs really didn't bother us at all.

C: Did you have any idea why she was doing it?

B: Oh, yes. Propaganda. We figured she was trying to

make us dissatisfied, break down morale. But you know, when you feel like you're winning, your morale is pretty good and that's the way we felt. Because we could see our troops and ourselves moving up the coast by jumps and we felt confident the war would end some day.

C: So really, your morale had nothing to do with homesickness.

B: No, not really, except it seemed like a long time, that's the only thing that I think--to soldiers, that's always the thing. Because there's nothing sure about when it's going to end.

(Discussion about his duties--troop carrier--dropped supplies to the forces.)

C: Did you hear any other propaganda aside from her?

B: I can't think of any, no.

C: I guess you've pretty well answered what I'm curious about, but I just wondered--were you aware of the treason trial--what happened afterwards?

B: In Chicago?

C: I'm not sure where it was--I think it was San Francisco.

B: Oh yes. I followed that closely. I couldn't figure why she came back to the United States. Maybe she was forced to. She lives in Chicago now, as far as I know. Yes, I'm sure she does.

C: I've heard that she does. I don't know if it's true . . .

B: After the trial I read that; that's going to be her home.

C: Did you feel that she should have been treated that way?

B: No, not at all. Not a bit. I would have thought they would have just written that off, because she never hurt anybody's morale. Not a bit. She might have if we were really losing the war and having lots of setbacks, but we didn't feel like we were.

C: Well, that's interesting, because I'm hearing a lot of people saying the same thing--that they looked forward to listening to her, or that they enjoyed the music and they just threw away the news part.

B: Yes, uh huh.

C: Some people have said that she was very accurate, that her newscasts were incredibly accurate.

B: Yes, they might have been. I can't really remember. Our side didn't slant the news too bad. You know, when we had setbacks we heard about them. So I can't say that hers were slanted too much one way or the other, nor ours either.

C: That's interesting. So she didn't hurt your morale at all.

B: No.