

The Ballad of Freddie Ohr: The True Story of Flying Ace Fred F. Ohr Explored through Solo
Performance

Minki Bai

A thesis

submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

University of Washington

2026

Committee:

Jeffrey Fracé

Cathy Madden

Scott Hafso

Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

School of Drama

©Copyright 2026

Minki Bai

University of Washington

Abstract

The Ballad of Freddie Ohr: The True Story of Flying Ace Fred F. Ohr Explored through Solo
Performance

Minki Bai

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:

Jeffrey Fracé

School of Drama

Freddie was a humble farm kid with a sky-high dream. He wanted to be a fighter pilot. But for a Korean American kid growing up between World Wars, becoming a fighter pilot wasn't going to be simple or easy. He was going to have to fight for every opportunity he had. Will Freddie take flight, or will the prejudices of 1940's America keep him grounded? *The Ballad of Freddie Ohr* is a solo performance depicting the experiences of Fred F. Ohr in becoming the first and only Korean American flying ace. Adapted from real, recorded interviews with Fred F. Ohr and inspired by American Folk Songs and Tall Tales like Paul Bunyan and John Henry, the play uses music and firsthand accounts to explore the immigrant experience and detail Fred F. Ohr's dogged pursuit of his dream despite setbacks, German air attacks, and racial discrimination.

Minki Bai

Graduate Thesis—The Ballad of Freddie Ohr

Jeffrey Fracé

March 18, 2026

I first came across Fred F. Ohr on a random night in 2024. I had been watching Apple TV's new television show, *Master of the Air*, which, of course, naturally devolved into hours trapped in a deep Wikipedia rabbit hole of influential aviators and warplanes. As someone with a BA in History and a childhood obsession for planes, such a free-falling descent into Wikipedia was admittedly more frequent than I care to admit. But this time, as I scrolled through countless articles, I began to consider how monoethnic these stories were. Not one of these aviators had looked like me. In the name of research, I began to search for Asian American aviators, which in turn led me to Fred F. Ohr. Here was a Korean immigrant in a time when Korea was just a footnote in most people's atlases. The son of Korean refugees and farmers who, against all odds, became a fighter pilot for the U.S. Air Force. In an era of deep prejudice, racial discrimination, and war, Ohr would survive German attacks, persist through unexpected setbacks, and rise through the ranks to become a Major, a Squadron Commander, and a highly decorated *Flying Ace*. A Korean American who not only piloted for the US Army but also achieved one of the most prestigious titles in aviation history? Why was this the first time I heard about him? How was he not already well-known? I saw myself represented in history in a whole new way. Here was a hero who looked like me. A man who so clearly represented how immigrants have sacrificed and thrived and fought, over generations, for an America that is not always welcoming. It was so distinctly Asian American. It was so intimately tied to my identity. I *had* to tell this story.

As a former historian, I believe that history is stories from the past that reveal the present and inform the future. I also believe this is true of Theatre, which is why I was so eager to portray Fred F. Ohr's story in a performance. Asian American voices have historically been sidelined and underrepresented in theatre and our larger culture. Our stories are often downplayed or left unsaid. Through Ohr, I saw an opportunity to use what I have learned at the University of Washington School of Drama to change this narrative. This MFA program has given me all the training, discipline, and tools I needed to approach this solo show on Fred F. Ohr

with confidence. In my short time here, the school has taught me to become a more complete performer, teacher, and creative. It strengthened my resilience and stretched my abilities as an artist. Crucially, this program has taught me to be a bold and powerful storyteller. I learned that I could use my whole self (mind, body, voice) to create art that is courageous, important, and resonant with today's issues. I learned that play and joy are powerful weapons to wield in our work as storytellers.

I turned to this idea of playful storytelling when developing the framework for my solo show. In Winter 2024's Voice class, with Bridget Connors, we worked on developing Mythology pieces. These short solo pieces depicted stories from legend, folklore, or mythology that were significant to us in some way. I did a short performance on the French-Canadian legend *Chasse-galerie*. But the project also sparked my interest in cultural folklore and legends. Specifically, I grew fascinated by American Tall Tales. Tales like Paul Bunyan, John Henry, and Johnny Appleseed. Larger-than-life exaggerated stories that tell of great human exploits and adventures. These characters are so emblematic of Americana, yet there was a clear lack of Asian representation among them. Fred Ohr's achievements were significant. Like the characters of these American Tall Tales, his story was larger than life. Unlike these characters, his story was true as well. Unbelievable but true. To me, the shape of an American Tall Tale, complete with song and an involved narrator, was the perfect framework to tell Fred Ohr's story. I believe that his story is a distinctly American story, and what better way to tell a larger-than-life, distinctly American story than in the style of an American Tall Tale.

As part of my research, I accessed almost six hours of recorded oral history interviews with Fred F. Ohr conducted by both the National World War II Museum and the Illinois WWII Memorial Board Classroom Project. These interviews allowed me to watch and hear Ohr recount his story in his own words, which I am very grateful for, and they would become the foundation of my script. The Professional Acting Training Program has taught me skills and given me confidence as a devising, generative artist, which has proven incredibly valuable while rehearsing this piece. But for the sake of this play, I also knew that I would be most served by developing my script before getting to work on my feet. Drama 451: Documentary Theatre, taught by Dr. Nikki Yeboah in Winter 2025, proved essential for this purpose and gave me an identity and an approach for my solo show. In that class, we discussed how real stories from the

past and present can be turned into embodied performances, and we practiced developing several forms of Documentary Theatre using source material we gathered through interviews. Our time spent in both verbatim and adapted Documentary Theatre proved especially relevant to my work. In the beginning, I had planned to take the transcripts from these interviews and turn them into a fully adapted narrative. But as I watched these interviews and began developing my script, my writing felt inauthentic and fake, especially when I was directly confronted with Ohr's language. I realized that to tell Fred Ohr's story truthfully, I would need to use his words and embody *him*. This is when verbatim theatre took effect. Verbatim theatre is built from the real words of real people, with the actor portraying this person's language, mannerisms, and physicality as closely as possible. I knew that the best way to tell Fred Ohr's story was to have *him* tell it himself. Thus, the script was initially constructed from the words Fred Ohr himself spoke, and my performance was inspired by the prosody and rhythm in which he spoke. Ultimately, I hesitate to call my piece a fully verbatim play. I discussed the ethics of Documentary Theatre extensively with Dr. Nikki Yeboah, both in class and in a meeting I had requested when I started writing my script. I feel it is imperative to clarify that aspects of the script and performance were adapted to fit the play's flow, narrative, and spine. In the end, up to 70% of the spoken elements of my script were directly pulled verbatim from Fred F. Ohr.

My experience in Drama 457/558: Devised Creation with Adrienne Mackey, taken in Spring 2025, was also crucial to developing my script. In this class, graduate students across different disciplines in the School of Drama came together to learn how to develop a new play using devising and other generative art practices. This class was practical in nature, and our work was later fully produced as *Omnia Break Room*, which played at the Meany Hall - Studio Theatre between November 6th, 2025, and November 16th, 2025. Crucially, this class taught me how to make something out of nothing, and I adapted the writing methodologies I learned from it towards the creation of my script. One such approach was using flashcards to develop the "score" of a play. Adrienne would frequently come to class and rehearsals with flashcards. The events of each scene were written on these cards, and their colors corresponded directly to where we were in the development of each scene. I picked up this practice while developing the script for the Ballad of Freddie Ohr and found it very useful for organization and tracking beats.

This practice was also supplemented by another scriptwriting tool introduced to me in Spring 2025. While taking Devised Creation, I was also taking Drama 451: Advanced Acting - Production Workshop with Valerie Curtis-Newton. This class focused on developing the skills, best practices, and artistic resilience needed to create solo shows and culminated in a short individual performance at the end of the quarter. One of the tools we used in this class was the Eight-Square method, which involves creating a draft outline for our shows by answering eight different prompts. These prompted us to consider an imagined beginning, an imagined ending, and various events that could happen in our show. It had us brainstorm symbols, metaphors, props, and music that could inspire or be used in our piece. Using both flashcards to develop the score of my solo show, as I learned in Devised Creation and the Eight Squares method, helped me build a clear structure for *The Ballad of Freddie Ohr*. Crucially, both tools helped me identify a spine or theme for our play, which proved essential. The interviews with Fred Ohr, which I used as my source, provided hours of information, but I also got lost in the details. Which parts were important? Which parts were unnecessary? What served the story and what detracted from it? Choosing a clear spine allowed me to pull myself out of the quagmire of info and stay focused on the story I was trying to tell. "*If the desire is great enough, it will happen*". These were the words that Fred Ohr's mother had told him as a child, and the spine I would choose for this piece. In the end, only parts of the interview that served this spine would make it into the final version of my script.

My rehearsal process was, to put it frankly, tumultuous. I very much missed having a director, and I found the challenges of self-producing a solo show to be a new and difficult experience. I was second-guessing my choices, having difficulty self-assessing my progress, and, at several points, I grew frustrated with myself and the process. Eventually, I learned that relying on my training was the most effective way to move forward. Integrated Alexander Technique, taught by Cathy Madden, proved invaluable as I navigated the rehearsal process. As I felt myself tightening and pushing during solo show rehearsals, I knew to gently ask my whole self to return to coordination. As stress and performance anxiety crept in, I knew to practice kindness and to invite the audience to join me in every step of the process. Rehearsing my show with Cathy Madden reminded me to allow my whole self to be at its full height, something I often forget, and was further complicated by my system curving around my guitar.

During one early workshop session with members of my acting cohort, I received a very thought-provoking note. “What makes this a live theatre piece and not just an audiobook?” It was a good question, one I had struggled to answer at the time. My Viewpoint training with Jeffrey Fracé was my path towards answering that question. Through Viewpoints, I was able to utilize different physicality, movements, and stage pictures to develop a live theatrical storytelling experience. The Viewpoints developed by both Mary Overlie and Anne Bogart allowed me to explore different spatial relationships, tempos, and gestures. A clear illustration of this practice in my solo show is through my use of only three chairs to create a sense of place and environment. To achieve this, I spent several rehearsals exploring different physical and gestural relationships with these chairs to develop different staging that still served the story. Rehearsing with different vocal Viewpoints also helped me develop distinct characterizations for the several characters I portrayed in this solo show. For example, Leon's character was developed by exploring different pitches and timbres, ultimately resulting in a higher-pitched, more youthful vocal quality. The character of the Colonel resulted from exploring different vocal dynamic ranges.

The Suzuki Technique, also taught by Jeffrey Fracé, was instrumental in developing my piece. This is perhaps the most evident by my Narrator character. In my solo show, the narrator is played with a certain stillness and powerful presence. There is a metaphorical engine within him turning, ready to explode. As a singer, he commands breath and vocal dexterity. These characteristics embody our Suzuki training. In training, we practice breath control, stillness, and the state of readiness through various physical exercises. In one such exercise, Sitting and Standing Statues, people are given a cue to quickly burst out of a crouched position into various statue poses. An American Tall-Tale narrator requires a certain *je ne sais quoi*. Exercises such as the one described provided me with the tools and training needed to find the proper, good-natured bearing and aura for my narrator.

Performing the solo show was unlike any recent performance experience. As an actor, I am generally comfortable on stage, but this piece, which felt so personal and vulnerable, brought back the nerves I had felt in my earliest shows. Ultimately, I felt my performance was a success, and this, too, is a testament to the training I have received here at the University of Washington. Before starting this program, I would have been terrified to sing and play my guitar in front of an audience, let alone sing a song that I wrote. Yet I chose early on to make singing a central part of

my solo show. I fully credit my newfound proficiency and confidence in singing to the Voice and Acting through Song classes taught by Bridget Connors and Scott Hafso, respectively. Voice with Bridget Connors has taught me to use Kirstin Linklater's vocal exercises to develop a whole-body relationship with my voice and breath that is both free of tension, flexible and responsive, and connected to thought and impulse. This work finally taught me to wield my instrument with greater precision and freedom. I had a difficult relationship with my singing voice for many years. Acting through Song, taught by Scott Hafso in Fall 2023 and again in Spring 2024, taught me to finally embrace my authentic singing voice as a powerful tool for acting and storytelling. I learned techniques that enabled a stronger, more efficient, and flexible singing voice and methods to find greater ease throughout my system as I incorporated my singing with my acting. I now see my singing voice as an asset rather than a weakness, and I am eager to explore it further in future works. Both my voice and singing classes repaired my relationship with my own voice. They gave me not only technical skills and practice, but also the confidence to fully embrace singing as a key element of my solo show.

Authentic storytelling was always at the core of what I wanted to achieve with my solo performance. Indeed, I credit the Play class I took with Bradley Wrenn in Fall 2023 with teaching me about the joys (and terrors) of playing the most authentic version of yourself on stage. A performance practice that has resonated with me in this class is fully revealing and opening ourselves to the audience. Let them see the messy, gooey, scary parts of us. Another is to share our talent with the audience. To "smear it everywhere," as Brad would say. I had initially found Play class to be a challenge. Coming from a background in improv comedy, I expected "play" to come naturally to me, but I struggled with the foundational skill of being vulnerable and present with the audience. It is still a skill I'm developing, and one I was eager to incorporate more into my acting. As such, these practices were at the forefront of my thoughts and at the heart of my performances. *The Ballad of Freddie Ohr* was made to share with the audience. As such, I strived to play it as truthfully, unapologetically, and authentically as I could.

Striving for a truthful, unapologetic, authentic performance is one thing, but practicing it required me to call upon my Alexander Technique training once again. In the rehearsal with Cathy Madden, I mentioned that playing my guitar in front of an audience was a new, intimidating experience for me, and it had caused tension and a loss of coordination in my hands

and arms. Cathy gently reminded me that I can always renew my desire and find a “Yes” message for my guitar-wielding character. Why did this narrator *want* to tell the story of Freddie Ohr? When I renewed my desire to tell the world about Fred F. Ohr and his accomplishments, it became less about the Narrator, the guitarist, and more about the Narrator, the storyteller. With this in mind, I used the Alexander Technique to invite audiences to be with me so they could hear the unbelievable, untold story of a Korean American Flying Ace. So they can learn about the legacy of an influential aviator and see themselves in Fred F. Ohr and in the determined pursuit of his dreams. Technically clean, mistake-free guitar playing now comes second to these objectives, allowing my whole self to find greater coordination and ease on stage.

This gentle invitation of the audience and reinforcement of the “yes” message became a core component of my warm-up and preparation before my performance. I spent time on stage before the audience arrived, performing my music for an imaginary future audience, all the while inviting them into the story I was about to share. I would renew this invitation backstage, right before my cue to enter. By doing so, I was able to prime my whole self to be with the audience and focus on my objective of telling the story of Fred F. Ohr. The difference was especially noticeable to me during my second performance, when I truly felt myself moving and responding, in coordination, with the audience. Another piece of my preshow preparation came directly from my Linklater Vocal training with Bridget Connors. This training provided me with a variety of efficient vocal warm-up techniques. One such technique I used to prepare for my performance was an exercise called a Zoo-Woe-Shaw Ladder, in which I would place certain vowel sounds and tones in different parts of my body and move through them, from lowest to highest, as though each sound were a different rung on a ladder. By doing so, I activate and align my breath and my body, allowing for a more prepared and responsive voice. This warm-up allowed me to fully embody Fred Ohr, the singing narrator, and the several other characters encountered throughout the show. In the end, both preparation techniques I used proved essential to the success of my performance. They enabled me to perform with greater coordination, responsiveness, and confidence as I shared my solo show with audiences.

I am delighted with the result of *The Ballad of Freddie Ohr*. I told a story that I strongly felt needed to be told, in a way that I wanted to tell it. I feel I have accomplished my goal of playful, dynamic storytelling and am thrilled with how I incorporated the American Tall Tale

genre into Documentary Theatre. Every step of this process, from research to writing to performance, challenged me in different and new ways. I feel proud. For persevering through these challenges, for investigating and discovering my unique artistic point of view, and for endlessly pursuing authenticity and truth despite the anxiety and fear that come with sharing deeply personal work. These successes were only possible because of the training I received at the University of Washington School of Drama, and I am grateful for the opportunity to showcase all I have learned in my solo show.

I am not finished with Fred F. Ohr. There is much more to his story than the twenty-minute piece I performed. I envision a full-length version, with more music and a full Bluegrass band. The full-length version will also include more stories from Ohr's life that were unfortunately cut for time from my final performance. I feel that there is an opportunity for me to more fully explore and embody Ohr's mannerisms, physicality, and voice as well. In the days following my performance, several people were generous enough to tell me that they had googled Fred Ohr to learn more about him. This was the best compliment I could've received. To pass on his legacy through my art is an honor. To uplift and raise awareness of an Asian American hero is a privilege. Crucially, Fred Ohr's story is not one of war or glory. It is an immigrant story. It is about the pursuit of dreams and ambition; it is deeply pro-human and fiercely anti-fascist; it is a story of persistence and perseverance, even when the odds are unfairly stacked against you. I believe this kind of storytelling is needed now more than ever, as systems in place blatantly work to diminish these stories. These are the values I will carry forward, no matter what form *The Ballad of Freddie Ohr* may take in the future.

Bibliography

Morgen Koelker, Kyle Miesbauer, Ali Dumar, Illinois Wwii Memorial Board Classroom Project,

Vicki Dewitt, and Fred F Ohr. *Fred F. Ohr Collection*. 1938. Personal Narrative.

<https://www.loc.gov/item/afc2001001.86287/>.

Freddie Ohr Interview, The National WWII Museum, [https://www.ww2online.org/view/freddie-](https://www.ww2online.org/view/freddie-ohr)

[ohr](https://www.ww2online.org/view/freddie-ohr), 9 January 2026.

The Ballad of Freddie Ohr

Written and Performed by Minki Bai

Music by Kyle Levien

Adapted from interviews with Fred. F. Ohr

Pt 1: FREDDIE DREAMS BIG

We hear the sound of a guitar tuning, a few chords being strummed offstage, maybe a harmonica. Music starts playing. Enter the NARRATOR.

NARRATOR:

In this land, there are dreamers who dream real big
Well, I'm here to tell you of a dreamer you may not know.
It's a tall tale that's maybe not so tall
And I'm here to tell it, the way I think it should be told.
Through his words, and through my own, and I'll even throw in a song.

This is the Ballad of Freddie Ohr

Verse 1

*Born in Portland, Raised in Idaho
Was a kid named Freddie Ohr
The son of Korean refugees
Spending all his days outdoors.*

*The good ol' US Airmail Service
Had flown over on high
And young Freddie would start believing
That one day he would fly*

Chorus

*Freddie, Freddie, Freddie Ohr
Get in that plane, and let it soar
Your moma told you all along
Said keep your desires strong.*

Freddie, Freddie, Freddie Ohr

Get in that plane, and let it soar

Verse 2

*Now the civil liberties back then
Was something to denounce
And the grinding military machine
Would rather Fred stay down*

*But Freddie would not stay down or grounded
Said, I'm not stopping now
Got himself into a fighter plane
And fought those Nazi Clowns*

Chorus

*Freddie, Freddie, Freddie Ohr
Get in that plane, and let it soar
Your moma told you all along
Said keep your desires strong.*

*Freddie, Freddie, Freddie Ohr
Get in that plane, and let it soar*

The narrator transforms into Fred F. Ohr.

FREDDIE:

Well, my name is Fred F. Ohr. I was born in Fairview, Oregon, to Korean refugees who fled after the Japanese annexation of Korea. And when I was about... four years old, five years old, the family moved to Idaho. Boise, near Boise, in the boonies. That's where I grew up.

We lived in a little tent, for a couple years to get started. But we survived. And we had a farm and I worked on a farm, because that's all we had. And I grew up a farm kid.

When I was six or seven... I saw my first airplane in flight. It was one of these bi-wing floppy-looking things. When you looked at the front, it looked like an old Cadillac radiator, and out right through the center of the radiator was this propeller. And it flew by. It was the United States airmail. That was one of the first airmail.

And when I saw that, I said, boy... this is what I want to do. I want to fly. But then I said I wanted to be a fighter pilot.

Now in those days, that was an impossibility... civil liberties weren't that great. And there wasn't a chance, in a snowball chance in ever getting that done.

But my mother would always say: "*If the desire is great enough, it will happen*".

"If the desire is great enough, it will happen".

And... She was right. She was right.

Pt 2: THE UNITED STATES ARMY AIR CORP SERVICE

FREDDIE:

When I was older, I joined the Idaho National Guard. I knew if I wanted to get into the Air Corps, and learn to fly that way, I would need two years of college. So I thought well, if I go into the National Guard, and if I just get that two years of college in, that would be great. So sure enough, I went in 1938 and started college.

By 1940, I was a communications sergeant in the Field Artillery.

I had a radio operator, Leon, and he was white. He was upstairs in our cabin one day, I outranked him so he slept on the top bunk and I slept on the bottom [*laughs*]. One day he reached over and he says:

LEON:

You know Sarge, the Air Corps examining board is coming. They're taking on new pilots.

FREDDIE:

Yeah, I knew that. I knew that.

LEON:

You know, I got an application in. I'm accepted. I want you to go to the examination with me.

FREDDIE:

[To Audience] Now, in those days, the Air Corps was really particular. And I had heard that there was a written thing in the Air Corps. And that they would not accept any Asians. Now I don't know how true that is. But I wouldn't doubt it very much.

What if I went with him, and they refused to examine him because he was with me? See?

But I was his friend so I went with him. And the morning of the exam came, we got out there and Leon gave them his paper. They took him in, and I decided, well, I better get to the farthest place I can get and grab some material.

Freddie grabs a newspaper and sits in a chair

And as I was reading there, I faintly heard somebody say,

COLONEL:

Sergeant.

FREDDIE:

And I thought, gee, who would be calling me? And pretty soon the voice got louder

COLONEL:

Sergeant!

FREDDIE:

And I didn't pay attention.

COLONEL:

SERGEANT!

FREDDIE:

So I had the paper like this [*gestures above head*], and I looked up and looked down underneath, and here was a pair of most exquisite riding boots. Boots a farm kid like me could only dare dream of owning. See, only a colonel could wear a boot like that. A company commander couldn't afford a boot like that. Beautiful pair...

Holy shit, it was a Colonel. And man he was... big. Towered over me.

Freddie jumps up and tries to stand at attention. He knocks over his chair in the process. The end table falls over.

COLONEL:

Next!

FREDDIE:

Next? Next for what?

COLONEL:

Sergeant, come with me.

FREDDIE:

[To Audience] And he ran back into the room... So I thought, well, I better get in there before he changes his mind.

And the next thing I knew, I was in there taking the flying school exam.

They tested my hearing,
Night Blindness,
Depth Perception,
Eye exam.

Afterwards, as I started out the door, this firm hand, somebody grabbed me by the shoulder. And I knew that it had to be the Colonel, because that's the only big guy in, around there.

COLONEL:

Son, I want you to, when you go back, I want you to get your personal effects in order, because come September, of this year, you'll be assigned to a flying school.

FREDDIE:

[To Audience] So, so I got in. Without even... registering for it.

The only thing I had was a dream that someday I'd, I'd be given a chance to fly. So those words came to my mind. "If the desire is great enough, it will happen."

I think the Colonel was running an experiment. He was going to, I think, he was going to send me through flight school to see if I'd get through. Because being... the second generation, my family being the first, we had nobody to back us up. We had no politicians or anybody. You know, no one expected an oriental like me to make it.

And well I did it. I got through flight school.

But I wasn't a fighter pilot.

Because I graduated in 1942. And it was time for us to find out which fighter plane we were going to fly and go to even more training for that. And Douglas came out with uh A-26. it was just like the A-20, but bigger. Firepower you wouldn't believe. And they were picking pilots to

train for that. And they were picking our group, our uh squad so to speak. Got down to my name, they stopped.

OFFICER:
Fred F. Ohr.

Stares at Freddie.

Aircraft Repair Depot at Daniels Field, Augusta, Georgia.

FREDDIE:
So there was my last hope of getting into a fighter plane. From that day on, I had to go to a... hangar where they were repairing aircraft. I was supposed to be the assistant engineering officer. Just an assistant engineering officer. They expected me to spend the rest of my career in a hangar around beat-up planes, just maintaining them, not flying them.

Boy... It was the last step, and I couldn't make it. I was so close to being a fighter pilot, and I couldn't make it. I just couldn't make it.

Pt 3: ENGINEERING BOY

FREDDIE:
I went in to meet my boss. And um, he was a young fellow. And I doubted very much that he knew anything about engineering, but that was his job, so I was reporting. And I was standing at attention in front of his desk.

[To Boss] 2nd Lieutenant Fred F Ohr reporting sir. I've been assigned to this Depot.

Long Pause

We spent two hours and a half there. Me standing at attention. He didn't say "At Ease" you know. He didn't even offer me a place to sit. Standing at attention. Listening to what he had to tell me, and all he could tell me was all the things that I couldn't do.

BOSS:
One of the things you can't do is test-fly any of the airplanes that are repaired. Matter of fact, don't even get inside an airplane to test them because the enlisted men can take care of that themselves.

Look, I don't want you to touch those airplanes as they fix them, cause when you crack em up, they're gonna feel real bad. The enlisted men are gonna feel real bad.

Leave all the flying up to me.

FREDDIE:

[To Audience] I always...you see these instance that people of rank pull on other people and things like this.

And I said to myself, if I ever became a squadron commander, that'll never happen. I mean it just-just doesn't make sense to be that – to be that way, but I guess that's the military – military way of doing things. I don't know.

Pt 4: Kasserine Pass

FREDDIE:

It wasn't long until war caught up to us and we were also sent to Africa, and here comes the story of how I uh... well I'll tell ya.

So in February about the 16th, I think, the whole army, I think it was the 7th Army... the 7th Army was defeated at Kasserine Pass.

We were on the airfield, just about 10 miles or 13 miles away. And we had to retreat, of course, because the Germans were coming.

We hear artillery falling and exploding nearby

FREDDIE:

The shells were bursting down on the field; we had to get out of there. So we had two airplanes there. Old P-40 Warhawks. Beautiful fighter planes. And my boss, yes, that same boss, came to me and says,

BOSS:

I'll fly the one on the right, you take the one on the left.

FREDDIE:

[To Audience] Now I thought that was a little... peculiar

But the artillery shells were landing on the field. I didn't have much time. So I got my chute and we put it in that one and he got in the other one. I hardly got seated and this guy *takes off*. And all I know is that we had to go West. And so I thought he was going to take off and circle around and wait for me. But he *just* took off. Left me behind.

So I strapped in and the crew chief, who was working on my airplane, was hesitant getting off the airplane.

FREDDIE:

Chief, what the hell is wrong?

CHIEF:

All I can tell you is this. They flew this airplane in late last night. We didn't have a chance to open it up to take a look to see what was wrong with it... And that's all I can tell you.

FREDDIE:

[To Audience] I was getting irritated because the shells were breaking on the field. I said... I used a few words there I won't repeat.

Did this airplane fly? CAN THIS AIRPLANE FLY?

CHIEF:

[Hesitantly] They flew it in?

FREDDIE:

That's good enough for me

FREDDIE starts the plane. Time slows as he begins to take off and fly.

FREDDIE transforms into the NARRATOR.

NARRATOR

And so our hero began to take flight

but it turns out, that crew chief was right to worry.

The story doesn't end here. Let me tell you what happens next.

When old Freddie made for safety somewhere out West.

Chorus

Freddie, Freddie, Freddie Ohr

Got in that plane, and made it soar

Your moma told you all along

Said keep your desires strong.

Freddie, Freddie, Freddie Ohr

Got in that plane, and made it soar

Bridge

*Then boom, the engine did blow
Face full of fire
5 minutes, he was back where he started
With a busted flyer*

Chorus 2

*Freddie, Freddie, Freddie, Freddie Ohr
You got in that plane, you made it soar
But it blew, and now you're...*

Stuck.

Well Shoot.

The Song ends abruptly. Narrator quickly transforms into Freddie

FREDDIE

Well... Shoot

I had hardly been in this plane for five minutes and the engine blew and I was right back on the ground. Right back where I started. With the Germans just a few miles away.

So I set about trying to destroy what was left behind, old planes and whatnot, so they couldn't be used by the Germans.

Freddie clears the stage. We might see him toss something offstage and hear an explosion.

*He completes his work and stands alone in silence. We might hear distant explosions.
Quiet. Freddie Alone.*

FREDDIE:

And that was the first time I come to realize, I said, how in the world was I thinking about getting out here when I'm by myself? Escaping never occurred to me.

Stillness and Silence.

*Suddenly, we hear a truck. It gets closer. Freddie sees it. It flashes its headlight at Freddie.
Truck doors open, then close.*

FREDDIE:

And here came an American truck. They were retreating. But this truck had seen my engine blow. And they saw what I was doing so they turned around... came over to pick me up.

Man, I thought that was it for me. But by luck or some divine intervention, I made it out.

It was just about daybreak when we caught up with the rest of the outfit.

When I returned, I found out that my Boss had told our Major that I was killed. He said we took off together and Two ME-109s, that's the German planes, attacked me and I was killed. And he said he fought them off.

He goes back and tells that story to the Major. And then I show up.

[To Major] Major Sir? I think it's time for me to go. Cause that SOB is going to kill me.

[To Audience] And, to make a long story short, that's it. That's how I got to be a fighter pilot. Because after that the Major transferred me into the 2nd Squadron, 52nd Fighter Group and where I got assigned to fly a Spitfire Fighter, and after three days, I was sent on my first mission.

I never did get to go to that phase where you have a regular training school for fighter pilots, so I learned on the job. And on that first mission, I almost lost my life right there.

But I did it, Man I finally did it. I was a fighter pilot.

“If the desire is great enough, it will happen” ...and it *happened*.

Pt 5: TAKING FLIGHT

FREDDIE transforms back to the NARRATOR.

NARRATOR:

By the time Freddie was done with the war in 1944, he would reach the rank of Major, and command his own squadron.

He was credited with six aerial victories and 17 aircraft destroyed on the ground, achieving Fighter Ace status.

They say that Freddie is the only Korean-American Ace, and only one of two Asian-American Aces in history.

And when he was no longer flying? When all that was said and done? He became a *Dentist*.

Freddie was a dreamer, a hero, and I like to think he's a legend, though he'd probably disagree.

So I hope you remember this tale of how a man, with everything stacked against him, wrote his own story. He dreamed real big.

If the desire is great enough... it will happen.

Chorus

*Freddie, Freddie, Freddie Ohr
Get in that plane, and let it soar
Your moma told you all along
Said keep your desires strong.*

*Freddie, Freddie, Freddie Ohr
Get in that plane, and let it soar*