



THE ADMIRAL CHESTER W. NIMITZ MUSEUM

PRESENTS

AN ORAL HISTORY

BY

RAYMOND F. HIGGINS, M.D. USN (RET)

FLIGHT SURGEON

AN OVERVIEW OF HIS ASSIGNMENTS

INTERPRETER

TODAY IS THE 25TH OF OCTOBER, 1997. I AM JAMES E. HIGGINS II INTERVIEWING RAYMOND F. HIGGINS. LT. COMMANDER, COMMANDER?

HIGGINS

FULL COMMANDER.

INTERPRETER

RETIRED?

HIGGINS

FULL COMMANDER NOW. RETIRED AT THE LOWER RANK.

INTERPRETER

WE WERE DISCUSSING YOUR DATE OF ENTRY INTO THE SERVICE.

HIGGINS

FEBRUARY , 1941.

INTERPRETER

YOU ENTERED IN BOSTON?

HIGGINS

I SIGNED UP IN BOSTON. I ENTERED IN QUANTICO VA. I HAD ORDERS TO QUANTICO, VA.

INTERPRETER

QUANTICO IS WHERE YOU TRAINED? HOW LONG WERE YOU IN QUANTICO?

HIGGINS

FOR 6 OR 8 WEEKS. I CAN'T REMEMBER. YOU HAVE THE LIST THERE HAVEN'T YOU?

INTERPRETER

YEAH. IT SAYS YOU TRAINED WITH THE MARINES FOR 3 TO 4 MONTHS. MARINE BARRACKS, QUANTICO, VA. FIRST MARINE DIVISION, FLEET MARINES FORCE.

HIGGINS

FLEET MARINE FORCE.

INTERPRETER .

FLEET MARINE FORCE. THEN SOME SORT OF A SCHOOL IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

NAVY?

HIGGINS

OH JUST FORGET THAT . I WENT FROM QUANTICO TO PARIS ISLAND.

INTERPRETER .

RIGHT.

HIGGINS

WHEN I WENT THERE, I SPENT 2-3 MONTHS.

INTERPRETER

WHAT DID YOU DO AT PARIS ISLAND?

HIGGINS

CONTINUED TRAINING. IN THE MEDICAL CORPS. FOR SEVERAL MONTHS.

INTERPRETER

WHEN WERE YOU COMMISSIONED AN OFFICER? BEFORE YOU ENTERED THE SERVICE?

HIGGINS

YES. OF COURSE.

INTERPRETER

ALL RIGHT. THEN YOU WENT TO NORTH CAROLINA, AFTER PARIS ISLAND?

HIGGINS AFTER BEING AT PARIS ISLAND FOR SEVERAL MONTHS, I WAS TRANSFERRED TO THE NEW RIVER MARINE CORPS BASE WHICH WAS IN CONSTRUCTION AT THAT TIME. I WAS STATIONED THERE FOR SEVERAL MONTHS. I LEFT FROM THERE IN THE FALL OF 1941, BY SHIP WITH THE FIRST ARMY DIVISION TO LAND IN THE AZORES, WHICH WE DIDN'T DO, OF COURSE.

THE LANDING IN THE AZORES WAS CANCELED AFTER 48 HOURS AT SEA.

INTERPRETER

WHY?

HIGGINS

WHY? AT THE REQUEST OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS WHO HAD DIFFICULTY IN GETTING FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT TO ACQUIESCE TO CANCELING THE LANDING.

INTERPRETER

WHAT SHIP WERE YOU ON GOING TO THE AZORES?

HIGGINS

I DON'T KNOW. IT WAS A BIG SHIP.

INTERPRETER

BUT YOUR DESTINATION, YOU KNEW WAS THE AZORES?

HIGGINS

YES. TIGHT.

INTERPRETER

THEN 24 HOURS OR 48 HOURS?

HIGGINS 48 HOURS AFTER BEING AT SEA, WITH THE FIRST ARMY DIVISION, THE LANDING WAS CANCELED BY THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF AT THE REQUEST OF FDR.

INTERPRETER SO, YOU TURNED BACK?

HIGGINS

WE TURNED BACK. CAME BACK TO NEW RIVER.

INTERPRETER

NEW RIVER WAS IN NORTH CAROLINA?

HIGGINS

YEP.

INTERPRETER THAT WAS WHAT YEAR DO YOU THINK?

HIGGINS

HIGGINS

STILL IN 1941. BEFORE THE WAR STARTED. THANKSGIVING DAY IN NOVEMBER OF '41, I WAS TRANSFERRED AS A LT. (JG) NOW IN THE MEDICAL CORPS OF THE U. S. NAVY, BECAUSE I HAD TO TAKE EXAMS TO GET INTERPRETERERPRETERO THE U.S. NAVY.

I WAS TRANSFERRED TO WASHINGTON, U.S. NAVY MEDICAL SCHOOL AT WASHINGTON D.C. FOR A COURSE ON TROPICAL MEDICINE.

INTERPRETER

THAT WAS WHAT, SIX WEEKS?

HIGGINS SOMETHING LIKE THAT

INTERPRETER

WHAT KIND OF TROPICAL MEDICINE? MALARIA?

HIGGINS

TROPICAL MEDICINE. THAT'S ENOUGH.

INTERPRETER

A LOT OF DISEASES.

HIGGINS

AT THE CONCLUSION OF THAT COURSE IN 3 TO 6 WEEKS, AND DURING WHICH TIME, THE WORLD WAR II BROKE OUT, PEARL HARBOR WAS BOMBED ON DEC.7, 1941. THE ENTIRE CLASS, AT THE CONCLUSION OF THEIR COURSE IN TROPICAL MEDICINE WAS SENT TO THE U.S. NAVAL AIR STATION IN QUANTICO FOR A COURSE IN AVIATION MEDICINE.

INTERPRETER

QUANTICO, NOT PENSACOLA?

HIGGINS

WAIT A MINUTE. WE WERE TRANSFERRED FROM THE NAVAL MEDICAL SCHOOL TO THE U.S. NAVAL AIR STATION IN PENSACOLA, FLORIDA.

INTERPRETER

YOU WERE ALL SENT TO PENSACOLA TO BE FLIGHT SURGEONS? THEY THOUGHT  
IT WOULD BE AN AIR WAR.

HIGGINS

I SAID A COURSE IN AVIATION MEDICINE.

INTERPRETER

OK. AVIATION MEDICINE.

HIGGINS

THAT'S RIGHT.

INTERPRETER

TELL ME ABOUT PENSACOLA. HOW LONG WERE YOU THERE?

HIGGINS

I WAS THERE ABOUT 3 OR 4 MONTHS.

INTERPRETER

AND WHAT DID YOU DO?

HIGGINS

I LEARNED TO FLY. I SOLOED. I COMPLETED THE COURSE IN AVIATION MEDICINE.

I WAS THEN TRANSFERRED TO THE U.S. NAVAL HOSPITAL AT PEARL HARBOR.

INTERPRETER

WHAT PLANES DID YOU LEARN TO FLY IN? DO YOU REMEMBER?

HIGGINS

TRAINING PLANES. ??? AND N3N's.

INTERPRETER

DID THEY CALL THEM "YELLOW PERILS"?

HIGGINS

YEAH, THEY CALLED THEM "YELLOW PERILS."

INTERPRETER

SO, AFTER PENSACOLA, YOU WERE TRANSFERRED TO WHERE?

HIGGINS

U.S. NAVAL AIR STATION AT PEARL HARBOR.

INTERPRETER

WHAT YEAR WAS THIS?

HIGGINS

THIS WAS IN '42. WE WENT TO PENSACOLA IN 1942 ALSO. WE LEFT THERE IN '42 AND WENT TO PEARL HARBOR. I WAS IN PEARL HARBOR UNTIL DEC., OF '42 WHEN I WAS TRANSFERRED TO THE SOUTHWEST PACIFIC. NAMELY, "VIZ".

INTERPRETER

WHAT IS "VIZ"?

HIGGINS

(UNINTELLIGIBLE) VIZ. I STOPPED AT LITTLE ISLANDS. I DON'T NEED TO SAY THAT DO I?

INTERPRETER

AUSTRALIA, NEW GUINEA?

HIGGINS

I AM TRYING TO THINK OF THE NAME OF THE PLACE. I MADE THREE STOPS ON THE WAY THERE. PALM ISLAND, CANTON ISLAND AND THE FIJU ISLANDS. AT NUMEA. IT'S A FRENCH PLACE.

INTERPRETER

BRISBANE?

HIGGINS

BRISBANE. YES. BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA. FROM BRISBANE BY PLANE TO SIDNEY. NEXT DAY TO MELBOURNE, NEXT DAY TO ADELAIDE, ALL IN AUSTRALIA. ON THE FOURTH DAY TO MY STATION IN PERTH, AUSTRALIA. I WENT THERE IN '42. I WAS THERE FOR 2 YEARS.

AFTER 2 YEARS, ==

INTERPRETER

LET ME JUST ASK YOU THIS. WAS THE FLEET AIR WING TEN. WAS THAT IN AUSTRALIA.

HIGGINS

NO. THIS WAS AIR WIN 101.

INTERPRETER

THAT WAS ON HAWAII?

HIGGINS

I NEVER GOT----

INTERPRETER

FLEET AIR WING 17? DOES THAT RING A BELL?

HI

NO, NO. THE FLEET AIR WING I WAS IN WAS 101.

INTERPRETER OH, NAVY SEA PLANE BASES IS WHERE YOU WERE?

HIGGINS

NO. I JUST STOPPED THERE. I STOPPED THERE. I STOPPED AT SYDNEY AND I STOPPED AT MELBOURNE, AND I STOPPED AT -----.

INTERPRETER

HOW LONG WERE YOU IN AUSTRALIA?

HIGGINS I WAS IN AUSTRALIA UNTIL 1944. ON PATROLS WITH WING 101 OVER THE INDIAN OCEAN AND OTHER EXTENSIONS UP INTERPRETERERPRETERO NEW GUINEA. LATER IN 1944, I TRANSFERRED BACK TO BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA, TO THE NAVAL AIR STATION AT BRISBANE. I LEFT THERE IN MAY, 1942 ON ORDERS TO SAN FRANCISCO.

INTERPRETER

LET ME JUST GO BACK. YOU SAID YOU WERE AT PEARL UNTIL DECEMBER '42. HOW COULD YOU BE BACK IN BRISBANE IN '42? DIDN'T YOU MEAN '44?

HIGGINS



'44 IS WHAT I MEANT.

INTERPRETER

ON THE WAY HOME, YOU FLEW BACK TO PEARL AND THEN ON TO SAN FRANCISCO. TELL ME ABOUT THE MOTOR GIVING OUT AND YOU LANDED WITH THREE MOTORS IN SAN FRANCISCO.

HIGGINS

FROM HAWAII TO SAN FRANCISCO, ONE MOTOR CONKED OUT. IT COULDN'T BE STARTED. ANOTHER OF THE MOTORS WAS NOT FIRING PROPERLY BUT WAS ABLE CORRECT DEFICIT AND WE LANDED AT SAN FRANCISCO WITH 3 MOTORS ON OUR FLYING BOAT. WITHOUT ANY TROUBLE.

INTERPRETER

DO YOU REMEMBER HOW LONG THAT FLIGHT TOOK?

HIGGINS

NO, I CAN'T. WE WERE IN SAN FRANCISCO FOR 3 WEEKS. WE LATER FOUND OUT IT WAS THE PRESENCE OF THAT TIME OF THE BATTLE FOR MIDWAY ISLAND. AFTER 3 WEEKS IN SAN FRANCISCO, I WAS GIVEN ORDERS TO WORSTER, MASS. FOR LEAVE WITH MY FAMILY.

AFTER COMPLETION OF MY LEAVE, IN MAY OF '44, -----I TRAVELED BY RAILROAD FROM FRISCO TO WORSTER, MASS.

INTERPRETER

THAT PROBABLY WAS MAY OF '44.

HIGGINS

I ARRIVED IN WORSTER ON MOTHER'S DAY, 1944.

INTERPRETER

THEN YOU WENT ON TO THE GLENNVILLE FLYING STATION IN ILLINOIS?

HIGGINS

GLENVIEW. GLENVIEW NAVAL AIR STATION. DON'T SAY FLYING STATION. IT IS ALWAYS NAVAL AIR STATION.

INTERPRETER

WHAT DID YOU DO THERE?

HIGGINS

I REPORTED FOR DUTY AND 2 WEEKS LATER, I WAS TRANSFERRED TO THE NAVAL AIR FACILITY, THIS IS NOT AN AIR STATION, THIS IS A FACILITY, IN COLUMBUS, OHIO, AS THE COMMANDING OFFICER OF THE MEDICAL DEPARTMENT.

INTERPRETER

THEN YOU GOT ORDERS BACK TO THE *RANGER*?

HIGGINS

IN THE SUMMER OF '44.

INTERPRETER

HOW MANY MONTHS WERE YOU IN COLUMBUS? WAS IT MONTHS OR YEARS?

HIGGINS

I WAS THERE IN '44 AND GOT TRANSFERRED TO THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER IN JUNE OF '45, I THINK.

INTERPRETER

AFTER AUSTRALIA, YOU WENT TO GLENVIEW, TO NAVAL AIR STATION, COLUMBUS. THEN *U.S.S. RANGER*, CV-4, NAVAL HOSPITAL, NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND. THAT'S IT. THE DATES ON THIS STUFF----

HIGGINS I WAS ON THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER IN '45 WHEN THE WAR ENDED. VJ DAY.

INTERPRETER

THE *RANGER*; ACTUALLY WAS THAT THE FIRST TIME YOU WERE ON THE *RANGER*?

HIGGINS

YEP.

INTERPRETER

AND WHAT WAS THE *RANGER'S* MISSION?

HIGGINS

TESTING JETS.

INTERPRETER

SO, YOU SAILED OUT OF SAN FRANCISCO?

HIGGINS

NO. IT WAS OUT OF SAN DIEGO.

INTERPRETER

AND WHERE DID YOU SAIL TO?

HIGGINS

OUT TO SEA. THAT'S ALL. OUT TO SEA FOR TRAINING. SHIP LANDINGS. AND WITH JET PLANES TOO.

INTERPRETER

YOU WERE OUT TO SEA WHEN-----THEN THE *RANGER* CAME BACK TO SAN DIEGO AND WAS IT DECOMMISSIONED OR WHAT?

HI

AFTER VJ DAY, THE PORTION OF THE PACIFIC FLEET WAS SENT TO THE EAST COAST OF THE UNITED STATES TO CELEBRATE NAVY DAY IN OCTOBER, 1945. MY SHIP, THE *RANGER* WAS SENT TO NEW ORLEANS, LA. TO HELP CELEBRATE NAVY DAY. AFTER A VISIT THERE OF A WEEK OR TWO, WE WERE ORDERED TO NORFOLK, VA. TO DECOMMISSION IT. ON THE WAY DOWN THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER, AN AIRCRAFT WAS TAKEN OFF FROM THE DECK OF THE *RANGER*. THE FIRST TIME IN HISTORY THAT AN AIRPLANE HAD TAKEN OFF ON THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER.

INTERPRETER

SO, YOU WENT FROM SAN DIEGO THROUGH WHAT, THE PANAMA CANAL?

HIGGINS

YES. TOOK US SEVEN DAYS TO GET THROUGH THERE BECAUSE THERE WERE SO MANY SHIPS. MUST HAVE BEEN A HUNDRED SHIPS.

INTERPRETER

TRAFFIC JAM.

HIGGINS

YEAH.

INTERPRETER

YOU CAME AROUND INTERPRETERERPRETERO NEW ORLEANS.

HIGGINS

WE STAYED THERE FOR A WEEK OR SO TO HELP CELEBRATE NAVY DAY THERE.

INTERPRETER

BUT YOU HAD TO GO UP THE MISSISSIPPI TO GET TO NEW ORLEANS?

HIGGINS

WENT UP WITH THE BATTLESHIP *MISSISSIPPI*. THE MISSISSIPPI GOT STUCK IN THE MUD AND FOR ALL I KNOW, IT IS STILL THERE. LATER, IN OCTOBER, *U.S.S. RANGER* WAS SENT TO NORFOLK, VA. WHERE IT WAS TO BE DECOMMISSIONED. I WAS TRANSFERRED TO U.S. NAVAL HOSPITAL, PORTLAND ORE. WHERE I TERMINATED MY SERVICES.

INTERPRETER

IT WAS AUGUST 15, 1947.

HIGGINS

I WAS DISCHARGED. I HAD TWO WEEKS OF LEAVE. I FINISHED THAT TWO WEEKS, I GUESS.

INTERPRETER

YOU RECEIVED THE AMERICAN THEATER RIBBON, AMERICAN DEFENSE RIBBON, ASIATIC-PACIFIC RIBBON, 3 STARS AND THE VICTORY MEDAL.

HI

WHAT WAS THE FIRST THING, THE AMERICAN DEFENSE RIBBON?

INTERPRETER

THE AMERICAN THEATER RIBBON, THE AMERICAN DEFENSE RIBBON, ASIAN  
PACIFIC RIBBON.

HIS

SURE.

INTERPRETER

I WANT TO ASK YOU ABOUT A PICTURE I HAVE.

HIGGINS

I WANT TO SAY I WAS DISCHARGED AS A FULL COMMANDER. I TERMINATED MY  
SERVICES IN THE NAVY AT THAT TIME. MY SERVICES IN THE U.S. NAVY WERE  
TERMINATED IN THE FALL OF 1947.